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## GENERAL NOTICES

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### NOTICE 1159 OF 2014

SOUTH AFRICAN MARITIME AND AERONAUTICAL SEARCH AND RESCUE ACT, 2002  
(ACT NO.44 OF 2002), AS AMENDED

**SUBSTITUTION OF SCHEDULE 1 (INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON MARITIME  
SEARCH AND RESCUE) AND SCHEDULE 2 (ANNEX 12 TO THE CONVENTION ON  
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION)**

I, Dipuo Elizabeth Peters, MP, Minister of Transport, under the powers vested in me in section 3 (2) (a) of the South African Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue Act, 2002 (Act No.44 of 2002), as amended hereby substitute Schedule 1 and 2 with the latest editions of the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue and Annex 12 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation respectively.

This notice will come into operation on the date of publication.



Dipuo Peters, MP

Minister of Transport

Date: 11/09/2014

# SAR Convention

International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979

As amended by resolutions MSC.70(69) and MSC.155(78)

*2006 edition*

ELECTRONIC EDITION



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**NOTE:** The name of the Organization as it appears in this publication was changed to "International Maritime Organization" by virtue of amendments to the Organization's Convention which entered into force on 22 May 1982.

## Foreword

The International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) was adopted by an international conference held in Hamburg, Germany, in April 1979. As its title implies, this Convention is designed to improve existing arrangements and provide a framework for carrying out search and rescue operations following accidents at sea. Although many countries have their own established plans for such emergencies, this was the first time international procedures had been adopted. The Convention entered into force in 1985.

Because the Convention imposes considerable obligations on Parties, such as setting up the required shore installations, the ratification process of the Convention has been slow. It was generally agreed that one of the reasons for the slow pace of implementation was problems with some provisions of the SAR Convention itself and that these could best be overcome by amending the Convention.

The Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR) was therefore requested to revise the annex to the Convention. A draft text was prepared and was approved by the sixty-eighth session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) in May 1997, and was then adopted by resolution MSC.70(69) at the sixty-ninth session in May 1998. The revised Convention entered into force on 1 January 2000. It clarifies the responsibilities of Governments and puts greater emphasis on the regional approach and co-ordination between maritime and aeronautical SAR operations.

The 2000 revision applies to the annex of the Convention only. The terms and definitions contained in chapter 1 have been updated and chapter 2, which deals with organization and co-ordination, has been re-drafted to make the responsibilities of Governments clearer. Other chapters in the revised SAR Convention address co-operation between States (chapter 3) and operating procedures (chapter 4, which incorporates the previous chapters 4 (Preparatory measures) and 5 (Operating procedures)). The original chapter 6 (Ship reporting systems) has been updated and renumbered as chapter 5.

The current publication contains the text of the revised SAR Convention as it has been further amended by resolution MSC.155(78), which was adopted in May 2004 and entered into force on 1 July 2006.

*Foreword*

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The 1979 SAR Conference resolutions are included without changes because they are part of the Final Act of the Conference itself, although most of them are either implemented or out of date.

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## **International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979**

THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION,

NOTING the great importance attached in several conventions to the rendering of assistance to persons in distress at sea and to the establishment by every coastal State of adequate and effective arrangements for coast watching and for search and rescue services,

HAVING CONSIDERED Recommendation 40 adopted by the International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea, 1960, which recognizes the desirability of co-ordinating activities regarding safety on and over the sea among a number of inter-governmental organizations,

DESIRING to develop and promote these activities by establishing an international maritime search and rescue plan responsible to the needs of maritime traffic for the rescue of persons in distress at sea,

WISHING to promote co-operation among search and rescue organizations around the world and among those participating in search and rescue operations at sea,

HAVE AGREED as follows:

### **Article I**

#### *General obligations under the Convention*

The Parties undertake to adopt all legislative or other appropriate measures necessary to give full effect to the Convention and its annex, which is an integral part of the Convention. Unless expressly provided otherwise, a reference to the Convention constitutes at the same time a reference to its annex.

### **Article II**

#### *Other treaties and interpretation*

(1) Nothing in the Convention shall prejudice the codification and development of the law of the sea by the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea convened pursuant to resolution 2750(XXV) of the General Assembly of the United Nations nor the present or future claims and legal views of any State concerning the law of the sea and the nature and extent of coastal and flag State jurisdiction.

*SAR Convention, 1979*

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(2) No provision of the Convention shall be construed as prejudicing obligations or rights of vessels provided for in other international instruments.

**Article III***Amendments*

(1) The Convention may be amended by either of the procedures specified in paragraphs (2) and (3) hereinafter.

(2) Amendment after consideration within the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (hereinafter referred to as the "Organization"):

- (a) Any amendment proposed by a Party and transmitted to the Secretary-General of the Organization (hereinafter referred to as the Secretary-General), or any amendment deemed necessary by "the Secretary-General" as a result of an amendment to a corresponding provision of annex 12 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, shall be circulated to all Members of the Organization and all Parties at least six months prior to its consideration by the Maritime Safety Committee of the Organization.
- (b) Parties, whether or not Members of the Organization, shall be entitled to participate in the proceedings of the Maritime Safety Committee for the consideration and adoption of amendments.
- (c) Amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting in the Maritime Safety Committee on condition that at least one third of the Parties shall be present at the time of adoption of the amendment.
- (d) Amendments adopted in accordance with subparagraph (c) shall be communicated by the Secretary-General to all Parties for acceptance.
- (e) An amendment to an article or to paragraphs 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.10, 3.1.2 or 3.1.3 of the annex shall be deemed to have been accepted on the date on which the Secretary-General has received an instrument of acceptance from two thirds of the Parties.
- (f) An amendment to the annex other than to paragraphs 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.10, 3.1.2 or 3.1.3 shall be deemed to have been accepted at the end of one year from the date on which it is communicated to the Parties for acceptance. However, if within such period of one year more than one third of the Parties notify the Secretary-General that they object to the amendment, it shall be deemed not to have been accepted.

*Article III*

- (g) An amendment to an article or to paragraphs 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.10, 3.1.2 or 3.1.3 of the annex shall enter into force:
    - (i) with respect to those Parties which have accepted it, six months after the date on which it is deemed to have been accepted;
    - (ii) with respect to those Parties which accept it after the condition mentioned in subparagraph (c) has been met and before the amendment enters into force, on the date of entry into force of the amendment;
    - (iii) with respect to those Parties which accept it after the date on which the amendment enters into force, 30 days after the deposit of an instrument of acceptance.
  - (h) An amendment to the annex other than to paragraphs 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.10, 3.1.2 or 3.1.3 shall enter into force with respect to all Parties, except those which have objected to the amendment under subparagraph (f) and which have not withdrawn such objections, six months after the date on which it is deemed to have been accepted. However, before the date set for entry into force, any Party may give notice to the Secretary-General that it exempts itself from giving effect to that amendment for a period not longer than one year from the date of its entry into force, or for such longer period as may be determined by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting in the Maritime Safety Committee at the time of the adoption of the amendment.
- (3) Amendment by a conference:
- (a) Upon the request of a Party concurred in by at least one third of the Parties, the Organization shall convene a conference of Parties to consider amendments to the Convention. Proposed amendments shall be circulated by the Secretary-General to all Parties at least six months prior to their consideration by the conference.
  - (b) Amendments shall be adopted by such a conference by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting, on condition that at least one third of the Parties shall be present at the time of adoption of the amendment. Amendments so adopted shall be communicated by the Secretary-General to all Parties for acceptance.
  - (c) Unless the conference decides otherwise, the amendment shall be deemed to have been accepted and shall enter into force in accordance with the procedures specified in subparagraphs (2)(c), (2)(f), (2)(g), and 2(h) respectively, provided that reference in subparagraph (2)(h) to the Maritime Safety Committee expanded in accordance with subparagraph (2)(b) shall be taken to mean reference to the conference.

*SAR Convention, 1979*

(4) Any declaration of acceptance of, or objection to, an amendment or any notice given under subparagraph (2)(h) shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary-General who shall inform all Parties of any such submission and the date of its receipt.

(5) The Secretary-General shall inform States of any amendments which enter into force, together with the date on which each such amendment enters into force.

**Article IV***Signature, ratification, acceptance, approval and accession*

(1) The Convention shall remain open for signature at the Headquarters of the Organization from 1 November 1979 until 31 October 1980 and shall thereafter remain open for accession. States may become Parties to the Convention by:

- (a) signature without reservation as to ratification, acceptance or approval; or
- (b) signature subject to ratification, acceptance or approval, followed by ratification, acceptance or approval; or
- (c) accession.

(2) Ratification, acceptance, approval or accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument to that effect with the Secretary-General.

(3) The Secretary-General shall inform States of any signature or of the deposit of any instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession and the date of its deposit.

**Article V***Entry into force*

(1) The Convention shall enter into force 12 months after the date on which 15 States have become Parties to it in accordance with article IV.

(2) Entry into force for States which ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Convention in accordance with article IV after the condition prescribed in paragraph (1) has been met and before the Convention enters into force, shall be on the date of entry into force of the Convention.

(3) Entry into force for States which ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Convention after the date on which the Convention enters into force shall be 30 days after the date of deposit of an instrument in accordance with the article IV.

(4) Any instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession deposited after the date of entry into force of an amendment to the Convention in accordance with article III shall apply to the Convention, as

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*Articles IV, V, VI, VII, VIII*

amended, and the Convention, as amended, shall enter into force for a State depositing such an instrument 30 days after the date of its deposit.

(5) The Secretary-General shall inform States of the date of entry into force of the Convention.

**Article VI***Denunciation*

(1) The Convention may be denounced by any Party at any time after the expiry of five years from the date on which the Convention enters into force for that Party.

(2) Denunciation shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of denunciation with the Secretary-General who shall notify States of any instrument of denunciation received and of the date of its receipt as well as the date on which such denunciation takes effect.

(3) A denunciation shall take effect one year, or such longer period as may be specified in the instrument of denunciation, after its receipt by the Secretary-General.

**Article VII***Deposit and registration*

(1) The Convention shall be deposited with the Secretary-General who shall transmit certified true copies thereof to States.

(2) As soon as the Convention enters into force, the Secretary-General shall transmit the text thereof to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for registration and publication, in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Article VIII***Languages*

The Convention is established in a single copy in the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish languages, each text being equally authentic. Official translations in the Arabic, German and Italian languages shall be prepared and deposited with the signed original.

DONE AT HAMBURG this twenty-seventh day of April one thousand nine hundred and seventy-nine.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned\*, being duly authorized by their respective Governments for that purpose, have signed the Convention.

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\* Signatures omitted.

*SAR Convention, 1979, as amended*

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## Annex

### Chapter 1

#### Terms and definitions

1.1 “Shall” is used in the annex to indicate a provision, the uniform application of which by all Parties is required in the interest of safety of life at sea.

1.2 “Should” is used in the annex to indicate a provision, the uniform application of which by all Parties is recommended in the interest of safety of life at sea.

1.3 The terms listed below are used in the annex with the following meanings:

- .1 *Search*. An operation, normally co-ordinated by a rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre, using available personnel and facilities to locate persons in distress;
- .2 *Rescue*. An operation to retrieve persons in distress, provide for their initial medical or other needs, and deliver them to a place of safety;
- .3 *Search and rescue service*. The performance of distress monitoring, communication, co-ordination and search and rescue functions, including provision of medical advice, initial medical assistance, or medical evacuation, through the use of public and private resources including co-operating aircraft, vessels and other craft and installations;
- .4 *Search and rescue region*. An area of defined dimensions associated with a rescue co-ordination centre within which search and rescue services are provided;
- .5 *Rescue co-ordination centre*. A unit responsible for promoting efficient organization of search and rescue services and for co-ordinating the conduct of search and rescue operations within a search and rescue region;
- .6 *Rescue sub-centre*. A unit subordinate to a rescue co-ordination centre established to complement the latter according to particular provisions of the responsible authorities;
- .7 *Search and rescue facility*. Any mobile resource, including designated search and rescue units, used to conduct search and rescue operations;
- .8 *Search and rescue unit*. A unit composed of trained personnel and provided with equipment suitable for the expeditious conduct of search and rescue operations;

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*Annex: chapters 1, 2*

- .9 *Alerting post.* Any facility intended to serve as an intermediary between a person reporting an emergency and a rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre;
- .10 *Emergency phase.* A generic term meaning, as the case may be, uncertainty phase, alert phase or distress phase;
- .11 *Uncertainty phase.* A situation wherein uncertainty exists as to the safety of a person, a vessel or other craft;
- .12 *Alert phase.* A situation wherein apprehension exists as to the safety of a person, a vessel or other craft;
- .13 *Distress phase.* A situation wherein there is a reasonable certainty that a person, a vessel or other craft is threatened by grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance;
- .14 *On-scene co-ordinator.* A person designated to co-ordinate search and rescue operations within a specified area;
- .15 *Secretary-General.* The Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Organization and co-ordination**

#### **2.1 Arrangements for provision and co-ordination of search and rescue services**

2.1.1 Parties shall, as they are able to do so individually or in co-operation with other States and, as appropriate, with the Organization, participate in the development of search and rescue services to ensure that assistance is rendered to any person in distress at sea. On receiving information that any person is, or appears to be, in distress at sea, the responsible authorities of a Party shall take urgent steps to ensure that the necessary assistance is provided. The notion of a person in distress at sea also includes persons in need of assistance who have found refuge on a coast in a remote location within an ocean area inaccessible to any rescue facility other than as provided for in the annex.

2.1.2 Parties shall, either individually or, if appropriate, in co-operation with other States, establish the following basic elements of a search and rescue service:

- .1 legal framework;
- .2 assignment of a responsible authority;
- .3 organization of available resources;
- .4 communication facilities;

*SAR Convention, 1979, as amended*

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- .5 co-ordination and operational functions; and
- .6 processes to improve the service, including planning, domestic and international co-operative relationships and training.

Parties shall, as far as practicable, follow relevant minimum standards and guidelines developed by the Organization.

2.1.3 To help ensure the provision of adequate shore-based communication infrastructure, efficient distress alert routing, and proper operational co-ordination to effectively support search and rescue services, Parties shall, individually or in co-operation with other States, ensure that sufficient search and rescue regions are established within each sea area in accordance with paragraphs 2.1.4 and 2.1.5. Such regions should be contiguous and, as far as practicable, not overlap.

2.1.4 Each search and rescue region shall be established by agreement among Parties concerned. The Secretary-General shall be notified of such agreements.

2.1.5 In case agreement on the exact dimensions of a search and rescue region is not reached by the Parties concerned, those Parties shall use their best endeavours to reach agreement upon appropriate arrangements under which the equivalent overall co-ordination of search and rescue services is provided in the area. The Secretary-General shall be notified of such arrangements.

2.1.6 Agreement on the regions or arrangements referred to in paragraphs 2.1.4 and 2.1.5 shall be recorded by the Parties concerned, or in written plans accepted by the Parties.

2.1.7 The delimitation of search and rescue regions is not related to and shall not prejudice the delimitation of any boundary between States.

2.1.8 Parties should seek to promote consistency, where applicable, between their maritime and aeronautical search and rescue services while considering the establishment of maritime search and rescue regions which shall be established by agreement in accordance with paragraph 2.1.4 or the reaching of agreement upon appropriate arrangements in accordance with paragraph 2.1.5.

2.1.9 Parties having accepted responsibility to provide search and rescue services for a specified area shall use search and rescue units and other available facilities for providing assistance to a person who is, or appears to be, in distress at sea.

2.1.10 Parties shall ensure that assistance be provided to any person in distress at sea. They shall do so regardless of the nationality or status of such a person or the circumstances in which that person is found.

*Annex: chapter 2*

2.1.11 Parties shall forward to the Secretary-General information on their search and rescue service, including the:

- .1 national authority responsible for the maritime search and rescue services;
- .2 location of the established rescue co-ordination centres or other centres providing search and rescue co-ordination, for the search and rescue region or regions and communications therein;
- .3 limits of their search and rescue region or regions and the coverage provided by their shore-based distress and safety communication facilities; and
- .4 principal types of available search and rescue units.

Parties shall, with priority, update the information provided with respect to any alterations of importance. The Secretary-General shall transmit to all Parties the information received.

2.1.12 The Secretary-General shall notify all Parties of the agreements or arrangements referred to in paragraphs 2.1.4 and 2.1.5.

## **2.2 Development of national search and rescue services**

2.2.1 Parties shall establish appropriate national procedures for overall development, co-ordination, and improvement of search and rescue services.

2.2.2 To support efficient search and rescue operations, Parties shall:

- .1 ensure the co-ordinated use of available facilities; and
- .2 establish close co-operation between services and organizations which may contribute to improve the search and rescue service in areas such as operations, planning, training, exercises and research and development.

## **2.3 Establishment of rescue co-ordination centres and rescue sub-centres**

2.3.1 To meet the requirements of paragraph 2.2, Parties shall individually or in co-operation with other States establish rescue co-ordination centres for their search and rescue services and such rescue sub-centres as they consider appropriate.

2.3.2 Each rescue co-ordination centre and rescue sub-centre, established in accordance with paragraph 2.3.1, shall arrange for the receipt of distress alerts originating from within its search and rescue region. Every such centre shall also arrange for communications with persons in distress, with search and rescue facilities, and with other rescue co-ordination centres or rescue sub-centres.

*SAR Convention, 1979, as amended*

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2.3.3 Each rescue co-ordination centre shall be operational on a 24-hour basis and be constantly staffed by trained personnel having a working knowledge of the English language.\*

**2.4 Co-ordination with aeronautical services**

2.4.1 Parties shall ensure the closest practicable co-ordination between maritime and aeronautical services so as to provide for the most effective and efficient search and rescue services in and over their search and rescue regions.

2.4.2 Whenever practicable, each Party should establish joint rescue co-ordination centres and rescue sub-centres to serve both maritime and aeronautical purposes.

2.4.3 Whenever separate maritime and aeronautical rescue co-ordination centres or rescue sub-centres are established to serve the same area, the Party concerned shall ensure the closest practicable co-ordination between the centres or sub-centres.

2.4.4 Parties shall ensure as far as is possible the use of common procedures by search and rescue units established for maritime purposes and those established for aeronautical purposes.

**2.5 Designation of search and rescue facilities**

Parties shall identify all facilities able to participate in search and rescue operations, and may designate suitable facilities as search and rescue units.

**2.6 Equipment of search and rescue units**

2.6.1 Each search and rescue unit shall be provided with equipment appropriate to its task.

2.6.2 Containers and packages containing survival equipment for dropping to survivors should have the general nature of their contents indicated by markings in accordance with standards adopted by the Organization.

### ***Chapter 3***

#### **Co-operation between States**

**3.1 Co-operation between States**

3.1.1 Parties shall co-ordinate their search and rescue organizations and should, whenever necessary, co-ordinate search and rescue operations with those of neighbouring States.

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\* Refer to the Search and Rescue section of the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases (resolution A.918(22)).

*Annex: chapter 3*

3.1.2 Unless otherwise agreed between the States concerned, a Party should authorize, subject to applicable national laws, rules and regulations, immediate entry into or over its territorial sea or territory of rescue units of other Parties solely for the purpose of searching for the position of maritime casualties and rescuing the survivors of such casualties. In such cases, search and rescue operations shall, as far as practicable, be co-ordinated by the appropriate rescue co-ordination centre of the Party which has authorized entry, or such other authority as has been designated by that Party.

3.1.3 Unless otherwise agreed between the States concerned, the authorities of a Party which wishes its rescue units to enter into or over the territorial sea or territory of another Party solely for the purpose of searching for the position of maritime casualties and rescuing the survivors of such casualties, shall transmit a request, giving full details of the projected mission and the need for it, to the rescue co-ordination centre of that other Party, or to such other authority as has been designated by that Party.

3.1.4 The responsible authorities of Parties shall:

- .1 immediately acknowledge the receipt of such a request; and
- .2 as soon as possible, indicate the conditions, if any, under which the projected mission may be undertaken.

3.1.5 Parties should enter into agreements with neighbouring States setting forth the conditions for entry of each other's search and rescue units into or over their respective territorial sea or territory. These agreements should also provide for expediting entry of such units with the least possible formalities.

3.1.6 Each Party should authorize its rescue co-ordination centres:

- .1 to request from other rescue co-ordination centres such assistance, including vessels, aircraft, personnel or equipment, as may be needed;
- .2 to grant any necessary permission for the entry of such vessels, aircraft, personnel or equipment into or over its territorial sea or territory;
- .3 to make the necessary arrangements with the appropriate customs, immigration, health or other authorities with a view to expediting such entry; and
- .4 to make the necessary arrangements in co-operation with other RCCs to identify the most appropriate place(s) for disembarking persons found in distress at sea.

3.1.7 Each Party shall ensure that its rescue co-ordination centres provide, when requested, assistance to other rescue co-ordination centres, including assistance in the form of vessels, aircraft, personnel or equipment.

3.1.8 Parties should enter into agreements with other States, where appropriate, to strengthen search and rescue co-operation and co-

*SAR Convention, 1979, as amended*

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ordination. Parties shall authorize their responsible authority to make operational plans and arrangements for search and rescue co-operation and co-ordination with responsible authorities of other States.

3.1.9 Parties shall co-ordinate and co-operate to ensure that masters of ships providing assistance by embarking persons in distress at sea are released from their obligations with minimum further deviation from the ships' intended voyage, provided that releasing the master of the ship from these obligations does not further endanger the safety of life at sea. The Party responsible for the search and rescue region in which such assistance is rendered shall exercise primary responsibility for ensuring such co-ordination and co-operation occurs, so that survivors assisted are disembarked from the assisting ship and delivered to a place of safety, taking into account the particular circumstances of the case and guidelines developed by the Organization.\* In these cases, the relevant Parties shall arrange for such disembarkation to be effected as soon as reasonably practicable.

## **Chapter 4** Operating procedures

### **4.1 Preparatory measures**

4.1.1 Each rescue co-ordination centre and rescue sub-centre shall have available up-to-date information especially concerning search and rescue facilities and available communications relevant to search and rescue operations in its area.

4.1.2 Each rescue co-ordination centre and rescue sub-centre should have ready access to information regarding the position, course, and speed of vessels within its area which may be able to provide assistance to persons, vessels or other craft in distress at sea, and regarding how to contact them. This information should either be kept in the rescue co-ordination centre, or be readily obtainable when necessary.

4.1.3 Each rescue co-ordination centre and rescue sub-centre shall have detailed plans of operation for the conduct of search and rescue operations. Where appropriate, these plans shall be developed jointly with the representatives of those who may assist in providing, or who may benefit from, the search and rescue services.

4.1.4 Rescue co-ordination centres or sub-centres shall be kept informed of the state of preparedness of search and rescue units.

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\* Resolution MSC.167(78) – Guidelines on the treatment of persons rescued at sea (adopted on 20 May 2004).

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*Annex: chapter 4***4.2 Information concerning emergencies**

4.2.1 Parties, either individually or in co-operation with other States, shall ensure that they are capable on a 24-hour basis of promptly and reliably receiving distress alerts from equipment used for this purpose within their search and rescue regions. Any alerting post receiving a distress alert shall:

- .1 immediately relay the alert to the appropriate rescue co-ordination centre or sub-centre, and then assist with search and rescue communications as appropriate; and
- .2 if practicable, acknowledge the alert.

4.2.2 Parties shall, where appropriate, ensure that effective arrangements are in place for the registration of communication equipment and for responding to emergencies, to enable any rescue co-ordination centre or sub-centre to access pertinent registration information quickly.

4.2.3 Any authority or element of the search and rescue service having reason to believe that a person, a vessel or other craft is in a state of emergency shall forward as soon as possible all available information to the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre concerned.

4.2.4 Rescue co-ordination centres and rescue sub-centres shall, immediately upon receipt of information concerning a person, a vessel, or other craft in a state of emergency, evaluate such information and determine the phase of emergency in accordance with paragraph 4.4, and the extent of operations required.

**4.3 Initial action**

Any search and rescue unit receiving information of a distress incident shall initially take immediate action if in the position to assist and shall, in any case without delay, notify the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre in whose area the incident has occurred.

**4.4 Emergency phases**

To assist in determining the appropriate operating procedures, the following emergency phases shall be distinguished by the rescue co-ordination centre or sub-centre concerned:

- .1 *Uncertainty phase:*
  - .1.1 when a person has been reported as missing, or a vessel or other craft is overdue; or
  - .1.2 when a person, a vessel or other craft has failed to make an expected position or safety report.

*SAR Convention, 1979, as amended**.2 Alert phase:*

- .2.1 when, following the uncertainty phase, attempts to establish contact with a person, a vessel or other craft have failed and enquiries addressed to other appropriate sources have been unsuccessful; or
- .2.2 when information has been received indicating that the operating efficiency of a vessel or other craft is impaired, but not to the extent that a distress situation is likely.

*.3 Distress phase:*

- .3.1 when positive information is received that a person, a vessel or other craft is in danger and in need of immediate assistance; or
- .3.2 when, following the alert phase, further unsuccessful attempts to establish contact with a person, a vessel or other craft and more widespread unsuccessful enquiries point to the probability that a distress situation exists; or
- .3.3 when information is received which indicates that the operating efficiency of a vessel or other craft has been impaired to the extent that a distress situation is likely.

**4.5 Procedures to be followed by rescue co-ordination centres and rescue sub-centres during emergency phases**

4.5.1 Upon the declaration of the uncertainty phase, the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre, as appropriate, shall initiate enquiries to determine the safety of a person, a vessel or other craft, or shall declare the alert phase.

4.5.2 Upon the declaration of the alert phase, the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre, as appropriate, shall extend the enquiries for the missing person, vessel or other craft, alert appropriate search and rescue services and initiate such action as is necessary in the light of the circumstances of the particular case.

4.5.3 Upon the declaration of the distress phase, the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre, as appropriate, shall proceed as prescribed in its plans of operation, as required by paragraph 4.1.

*4.5.4 Initiation of search and rescue operations when the position of the search object is unknown*

In the event of an emergency phase being declared for a search object whose position is unknown, the following shall apply:

- .1 when an emergency phase exists, a rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre shall, unless it is aware that other centres are taking action, assume responsibility for initiating suitable

*Annex: chapter 4*

action and confer with other centres with the objective of designating one centre to assume responsibility;

- .2 unless otherwise decided by agreement between the centres concerned, the centre to be designated shall be the centre responsible for the area in which the search object was, according to its last reported position; and
- .3 after the declaration of the distress phase, the centre co-ordinating the search and rescue operations shall, as appropriate, inform other centres of all the circumstances of the emergency and of all subsequent developments.

4.5.5 *Passing information to persons, vessels, or other craft for which an emergency phase has been declared*

Whenever possible, the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre responsible for search and rescue operations shall forward to the person, a vessel or other craft for which an emergency phase has been declared, information on the search and rescue operations it has initiated.

**4.6 Co-ordination when two or more Parties are involved**

For search and rescue operations involving more than one Party, each Party shall take appropriate action in accordance with the plans of operation referred to in paragraph 4.1 when so requested by the rescue co-ordination centre of the region.

**4.7 On-scene co-ordination of search and rescue activities**

4.7.1 The activities of search and rescue units and other facilities engaged in search and rescue operations shall be co-ordinated on-scene to ensure the most effective results.

4.7.2 When multiple facilities are about to engage in search and rescue operations, and the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre considers it necessary, the most capable person should be designated as on-scene co-ordinator as early as practicable and preferably before the facilities arrive within the specified area of operation. Specific responsibilities shall be assigned to the on-scene co-ordinator, taking into account the apparent capabilities of the on-scene co-ordinator and operational requirements.

4.7.3 If there is no responsible rescue co-ordination centre or, for any reason, the responsible rescue co-ordination centre is unable to co-ordinate the search and rescue mission, the facilities involved should designate an on-scene co-ordinator by mutual agreement.

**4.8 Termination and suspension of search and rescue operations**

4.8.1 Search and rescue operations shall continue, when practicable, until all reasonable hope of rescuing survivors has passed.

*SAR Convention, 1979, as amended*

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4.8.2 The responsible rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre concerned shall normally decide when to discontinue search and rescue operations. If no such centre is involved in co-ordinating the operations, the on-scene co-ordinator may take this decision.

4.8.3 When a rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre considers, on the basis of reliable information, that a search and rescue operation has been successful, or that the emergency no longer exists, it shall terminate the search and rescue operation and promptly so inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified.

4.8.4 If a search and rescue operation on-scene becomes impracticable and the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre concludes that survivors might still be alive, the centre may temporarily suspend the on-scene activities pending further developments, and shall promptly so inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified. Information subsequently received shall be evaluated and search and rescue operations resumed when justified on the basis of such information.

4.8.5 The rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre concerned shall initiate the process of identifying the most appropriate place(s) for disembarking such persons found in distress at sea. It shall inform the ship or ships and other relevant parties concerned thereof.

## *Chapter 5*

### Ship reporting systems

#### 5.1 General

5.1.1 Ship reporting systems may be established either individually by Parties or in co-operation with other States, where this is considered necessary, to facilitate search and rescue operations.

5.1.2 Parties contemplating the institution of a ship reporting system should take account of the relevant recommendations of the Organization. Parties should also consider whether existing reporting systems or other sources of ship position data can provide adequate information for the region, and seek to minimize unnecessary additional reports by ships, or the need for rescue co-ordination centres to check with multiple reporting systems to determine availability of ships to assist with search and rescue operations.

5.1.3 The ship reporting system should provide up-to-date information on the movements of vessels in order, in the event of a distress incident, to:

- .1 reduce the interval between the loss of contact with a vessel and the initiation of search and rescue operations in cases where no distress signal has been received;

*Annex: chapter 5*

- .2 permit rapid identification of vessels which may be called upon to provide assistance;
- .3 permit delineation of a search area of limited size in case the position of a person, a vessel or other craft in distress is unknown or uncertain; and
- .4 facilitate the provision of urgent medical assistance or advice.

**5.2 Operational requirements**

5.2.1 Ship reporting systems should satisfy the following requirements:

- .1 provision of information, including sailing plans and position reports, which would make it possible to determine the current and future positions of participating vessels;
- .2 maintenance of a shipping plot;
- .3 receipt of reports at appropriate intervals from participating vessels;
- .4 simplicity in system design and operation; and
- .5 use of internationally agreed standard ship reporting format and procedures.

**5.3 Types of reports\***

5.3.1 A ship reporting system should incorporate the following types of ship reports in accordance with the recommendations of the Organization:

- .1 Sailing plan;
- .2 Position report; and
- .3 Final report.

**5.4 Use of systems**

5.4.1 Parties should encourage all vessels to report their position when travelling in areas where arrangements have been made to collect information on positions for search and rescue purposes.

5.4.2 Parties recording information on the position of vessels should disseminate, so far as practicable, such information to other States when so requested for search and rescue purposes.

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\* Reference is made to resolution A.851(20), General principles for ship reporting systems and ship reporting requirements, including guidelines for reporting incidents involving dangerous goods, harmful substances and/or marine pollutants.

## Resolutions of the 1979 SAR Conference

### *Resolution 1*

#### Arrangements for provision and co-ordination of search and rescue services

THE CONFERENCE,

NOTING the provisions of the annex to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, concerning arrangements for the provision and co-ordination of search and rescue services,

NOTING FURTHER that the annex provides that maritime search and rescue regions shall be established by agreement among the Parties,

RECOGNIZING that aeronautical search and rescue services have been established by Contracting States to the Convention on International Civil Aviation,

BEARING IN MIND that close co-operation between maritime and aeronautical search and rescue services is essential,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER the need to provide and co-ordinate maritime search and rescue services on a world-wide basis,

NOTING ALSO the need for further action,

RESOLVES

- (a) to urge States to provide, to the extent that it may be necessary and feasible, co-ordination of search and rescue services in all sea areas regardless of whether or not they provide those services for aeronautical purposes;
- (b) to urge States to forward to the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization information on their national search and rescue services and to invite the Secretary-General of that Organization to circulate the information received to all its Member Governments;
- (c) to invite the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization:
  - (1) to continue to work closely with the International Civil Aviation Organization in order to harmonize aeronautical and maritime search and rescue plans and procedures;

*Resolutions of the 1979 SAR Conference*

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- (2) to publish all available information concerning agreements on maritime search and rescue regions or arrangements for equivalent overall co-ordination of maritime search and rescue services; and
- (3) to advise and assist States in the establishment of their search and rescue services.

***Resolution 2***

**Cost to ships of participation in ship reporting systems**

THE CONFERENCE,

NOTING Recommendation 47 of the International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea, 1960,

RECOGNIZING that, with the growing importance of national, and possibly in the future, of international ship reporting systems, Recommendation 47 has probably more significance today when it was originally adopted,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the absence of any charge for participation could provide, as has already been demonstrated, a powerful incentive for ships to co-operate in voluntary ship reporting systems,

RECOGNIZING IN ADDITION that ships' participation in voluntary ship reporting systems has demonstrated that it has safety advantages,

RECOMMENDS that States should arrange that participation in such systems shall be free of message cost to the ships concerned.

***Resolution 3***

**Need for an internationally agreed format and procedures for ship reporting systems**

THE CONFERENCE,

CONSIDERING the provisions of chapter 6\* of the annex to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, relating to ship reporting systems,

CONSIDERING FURTHER that several national ship reporting systems are in force at present, using differing procedures and reporting formats,

RECOGNIZING that masters of international trading vessels moving from an area covered by one ship reporting system to another could become confused by these differing procedures and reporting formats,

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\* This is chapter 5 of the revised annex that has been adopted by MSC.70(69).

*Resolutions 2, 3*

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the possibility of such confusion could be much reduced by the adoption of an internationally agreed standard ship reporting format and internationally agreed standard procedures,

INVITES the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization to develop, using the annexed format as a basis, an internationally agreed format for ship reporting systems established for the purpose of search and rescue in accordance with the provisions of chapter 6\* of the annex to the Convention,

REQUESTS that Organization to ensure that all reporting systems, established for purposes other than search and rescue, are as far as possible compatible in reporting format and procedures with those to be developed for the purpose of search and rescue.

Annex  
*Ship reporting format and procedures*<sup>†</sup>

FORMAT (see note 1)

Message identifier:	SHIPREP (area or system designator)
Type of report:	A – A 2-letter group: “SP” (sailing plan) “PR” (position report) “FR” (final report)
Ship:	B – Name and call sign or ship station identity
Date/time (G.M.T.):	C – A 6-digit group giving date of month (first 2 digits), hours and minutes (last 4 digits)
Position:	D – Departure port (SP) or arrival port (FR)  E – A 4-digit group giving latitude in degrees and minutes suffixed with “N” or “S” and a 5-digit group giving longitude in degrees and minutes suffixed with “E” or “W”
True course:	F – A 3-digit group
Speed in knots:	G – A 2-digit group
Route information:	H – Intended track (see note 2)

\* This is chapter 5 of the revised annex that has been adopted by MSC.70(69).

<sup>†</sup> See also resolution A.851(20).

*Resolutions of the 1979 SAR Conference*

E.T.A.	I – Date/time group expressed by a 6-digit group, as in C above, followed by destination
Coast radio station guarded:	J – Name of station
Time of next report:	K – Date/time group expressed by a 6-digit group, as in C above
Miscellaneous:	L – Any other information

## PROCEDURES

The report should be sent as follows:

- Sailing report – At, or immediately after, departure from a port or when entering into the area covered by a system (see note 3).
- Position report – When the ship's position varies more than 25 miles from the position that would have been predicted from previous reports, after a course alteration, when required by the system or as decided by the master.
- Final report – Shortly before or on arrival at destination or when leaving the area covered by a system (see note 3).

*Note 1:* Sections of the ship reporting format which are inappropriate should be omitted from the report. See the following examples.

Examples of messages produced by using this format:

Sailing plan	Position report	Final report
SHIPREP	SHIPREP	SHIPREP
A SP	A PR	A FR
B NONSUCH/ MBCH	B NONSUCH/ MBCH	B NONSUCH/ MBCH
C 021030	C 041200	C 110500
D NEW YORK	E 4604N 05123W	D LONDON
F 060	F 089	
G 16	G 15	
H GC	J PORTISHEAD	
I 102145 LONDON	K 061200	
J PORTISHEAD		
K 041200		

*Resolution 4*

*Note 2:* In a reporting system, intended track may be reported by:

- (a) latitude and longitude for each turn point, expressed as in E above, together with type of intended track between these points, for example "RL" (rhumb line) "GC" (great circle) or "coastal", or
- (b) in the case of coastal sailing, the forecast date and time, expressed by a 6-digit group as in C above, of passing significant off-shore points.

*Note 3:* Sailing plan and final report should be transmitted rapidly, using a system other than radiocommunications where practicable.

***Resolution 4*****Search and rescue manuals**

THE CONFERENCE,

NOTING that the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization has prepared a Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual (MERSAR)\* and an IMCO Search and Rescue Manual (IMCOSAR)\*,

RECOGNIZING that the Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual provides valuable guidance for seafarers during emergencies at sea,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the IMCO Search and Rescue Manual contains guidelines for Governments wishing to establish or develop their search and rescue organizations and for personnel who may be involved in the provision of search and rescue services,

BEING OF THE OPINION that the manuals constitute a valuable supplement to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, and its annex and will greatly contribute towards the objectives of the Convention,

RESOLVES:

- (a) to urge States to use the guidelines provided in the manuals and to bring them to the attention of all concerned; and
- (b) to endorse the action already taken by the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization for amending and keeping the manuals up to date.

\* The MERSAR Manual and the IMCOSAR Manual were superseded by the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (IAMSAR) Manual in 1998.

*Resolutions of the 1979 SAR Conference*

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**Resolution 5**

Frequencies for maritime search and rescue

THE CONFERENCE,

NOTING that the World Administrative Radio Conference, 1979, will decide on measures which could have a far-reaching effect on the frequency spectrum,

BEARING IN MIND that the frequencies used in the present maritime distress system do not make adequate provision for ships in distress at a distance of more than approximately 150 miles from the coast,

RECOGNIZING that all maritime radiocommunications, whether making use of distress or public correspondence frequencies, can have distress and safety implications,

URGES the World Administrative Radio Conference, 1979:

- (a) to allocate one frequency, to be reserved exclusively for distress and safety purposes, in each of the 4, 6, 8, 12 and 16 MHz maritime mobile bands using A3J class of emission for use in all ITU Regions and to include guard bands on each side of these frequencies; the use of digital selective calling should be permitted on these frequencies; and
- (b) to recognize that all telecommunications to and from ships at sea may comprise elements of importance to search and rescue, and to support proposals for adequate frequency allocations to the maritime mobile service.

**Resolution 6**

Development of a global maritime distress  
and safety system

THE CONFERENCE,

HAVING concluded the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, which establishes an international plan for the co-ordination of search and rescue operations,

RECOGNIZING that the existence of an effective distress and safety communications network is important for the efficient operation of the search and rescue plan,

BEING AWARE that the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization has under continuous review the maritime distress and safety system and has adopted resolutions dealing with the communications aspects of the system,

*Resolutions 5, 6, 7*

CONSIDERING that a global maritime distress and safety system should provide, among other things, the essential radio elements of the international search and rescue plan,

INVITES the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization to develop a global maritime distress and safety system that includes telecommunications provisions for the effective operation of the search and rescue plan prescribed by the annex to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979.

***Resolution 7*****Harmonization of search and rescue services  
with maritime meteorological services**

THE CONFERENCE,

BEARING IN MIND the importance of meteorological and oceanographical information in search and rescue operations,

CONSIDERING the desirability of meteorological information covering the same areas as search and rescue regions,

CONSIDERING FURTHER that routine weather reports from ships normally include the ship's position,

BEING OF THE OPINION that the practice of ships transmitting weather reports and position reports through the same coast radio station would facilitate the transmission of such reports and encourage ship participation in both systems,

INVITES the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization:

- (a) to work closely with the World Meteorological Organization to explore the practicability of harmonizing the areas of maritime meteorological forecasts and warnings with maritime search and rescue regions;
- (b) to request the World Meteorological Organization to take steps to ensure that up-to-date meteorological and oceanographical information is immediately available to the search and rescue services for the whole of the regions they serve; and
- (c) to investigate the feasibility of ships making weather and position reports to the same coast radio station.

*Resolutions of the 1979 SAR Conference*

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**Resolution 8**

**Promotion of technical co-operation**

THE CONFERENCE,

RECOGNIZING that prompt and effective maritime search and rescue requires broad international co-operation and substantial technical and scientific resources,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that Parties to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, will be called upon to make arrangements to achieve the objectives of that Convention and to assume full responsibility for such arrangements,

BEING CONVINCED that the promotion of technical co-operation at inter-governmental level will expedite the implementation of the Convention by States that do not as yet possess the necessary technical and scientific resources,

URGES States to promote, in consultation with, and with the assistance of, the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, support for States requesting technical assistance for:

- (a) the training of personnel necessary for search and rescue; and
- (b) the provision of the equipment and facilities necessary for search and rescue,

FURTHER URGES States to implement the above-mentioned measures without awaiting the entry into force of the Convention.

**NOTICE 1160 OF 2014**

**International Standards  
and Recommended Practices**



**Annex 12  
to the Convention on  
International Civil Aviation**

# **Search and Rescue**

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**This edition incorporates all amendments  
adopted by the Council prior to 24 February 2004  
and supersedes, on 25 November 2004, all previous  
editions of Annex 12.**

**For information regarding the applicability  
of the Standards and Recommended Practices,  
see Foreword.**

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## TRANSMITTAL NOTE

### NEW EDITIONS OF ANNEXES TO THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION

It has come to our attention that when a new edition of an Annex is published, users have been discarding, along with the previous edition of the Annex, the **Supplement** to the previous edition. Please note that the Supplement to the previous edition should be retained until a new Supplement is issued.



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## FOREWORD

### Historical background

In December 1946, the Search and Rescue Division, at its second session, made recommendations for Standards and Recommended Practices for Search and Rescue. These were developed by the Secretariat and the then existent Air Navigation Committee, and were duly submitted to the Council. The proposals were not accepted by the Council in the form in which they were presented and, on 20 April 1948, were referred back to the Air Navigation Committee for further consideration.

A further draft Annex was then developed in the light of experience gained at Regional Air Navigation Meetings and eventually was approved in principle by the Air Navigation Commission and circulated to States for comment. Further development was made by the Air Navigation Commission as a result of States' comments and the resulting proposals were adopted by the Council on 25 May 1950 and designated as Annex 12 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation. The Annex became effective on 1 December 1950 and came into force on 1 March 1951.

Table A shows the origin of subsequent amendments together with a list of the principal subjects involved and the dates on which the Annex and the amendments were adopted by the Council, when they became effective and when they became applicable.

### Applicability

The Standards and Recommended Practices in this document govern the application of the *Regional Supplementary Procedures* — Search and Rescue, contained in Doc 7030, in which document will be found subsidiary procedures of regional application.

Annex 12 is applicable to the establishment, maintenance and operation of search and rescue services in the territories of Contracting States and over the high seas, and to the coordination of such services between States.

### Action by Contracting States

*Notification of differences.* The attention of Contracting States is drawn to the obligation imposed by Article 38 of the Convention by which Contracting States are required to notify the Organization of any differences between their national regulations and practices and the International Standards

contained in this Annex and any amendments thereto. Contracting States are invited to extend such notification to any differences from the Recommended Practices contained in this Annex, and any amendments thereto, when the notification of such differences is important for the safety of air navigation. Further, Contracting States are invited to keep the Organization currently informed of any differences which may subsequently occur, or of the withdrawal of any differences previously notified. A specific request for notification of differences will be sent to Contracting States immediately after the adoption of each Amendment to this Annex.

Attention of States is also drawn to the provisions of Annex 15 related to the publication of differences between their national regulations and practices and the related ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices through the Aeronautical Information Service, in addition to the obligation of States under Article 38 of the Convention.

*Promulgation of information.* Information relating to the establishment and withdrawal of and changes to facilities, services and procedures affecting aircraft operations provided according to the Standards and Recommended Practices specified in this Annex should be notified and take effect in accordance with Annex 15.

*Use of the text of the Annex in national regulations.* The Council, on 13 April 1948, adopted a resolution inviting the attention of Contracting States to the desirability of using in their own national regulations, as far as practicable, the precise language of those ICAO Standards that are of a regulatory character and also of indicating departures from the Standards, including any additional national regulations that were important for the safety or regularity of air navigation. Wherever possible, the provisions of this Annex have been written in such a way as would facilitate incorporation, without major textual changes, into national legislation.

### Status of Annex components

An Annex is made up of the following component parts, not all of which, however, are necessarily found in every Annex; they have the status indicated:

#### 1.— *Material comprising the Annex proper:*

- a) *Standards and Recommended Practices* adopted by the Council under the provisions of the Convention. They are defined as follows:

*Annex 12 — Search and Rescue**Foreword*

*Standard.* Any specification for physical characteristics, configuration, matériel, performance, personnel or procedure, the uniform application of which is recognized as necessary for the safety or regularity of international air navigation and to which Contracting States will conform in accordance with the Convention; in the event of impossibility of compliance, notification to the Council is compulsory under Article 38.

*Recommended Practice.* Any specification for physical characteristics, configuration, matériel, performance, personnel or procedure, the uniform application of which is recognized as desirable in the interests of safety, regularity or efficiency of international air navigation, and to which Contracting States will endeavour to conform in accordance with the Convention.

- b) *Appendices* comprising material grouped separately for convenience but forming part of the Standards and Recommended Practices adopted by the Council.
- c) *Definitions* of terms used in the Standards and Recommended Practices which are not self-explanatory in that they do not have accepted dictionary meanings. A definition does not have an independent status but is an essential part of each Standard and Recommended Practice in which the term is used, since a change in the meaning of the term would affect the specification.

2.— *Material approved by the Council for publication in association with the Standards and Recommended Practices:*

- a) *Forewords* comprising historical and explanatory material based on the action of the Council and including an explanation of the obligations of States with regard to the application of the Standards and Recommended Practices ensuing from the Convention and the Resolution of Adoption.
- b) *Introductions* comprising explanatory material introduced at the beginning of parts, chapters or sections of the Annex to assist in the understanding of the application of the text.
- c) *Notes* included in the text, where appropriate, to give factual information or references bearing on the Standards or Recommended Practices in question, but not

constituting part of the Standards or Recommended Practices.

- d) *Attachments* comprising material supplementary to the Standards and Recommended Practices, or included as a guide to their application.

**Selection of language**

This Annex has been adopted in six languages — English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish. Each Contracting State is requested to select one of those texts for the purpose of national implementation and for other effects provided for in the Convention, either through direct use or through translation into its own national language, and to notify the Organization accordingly.

**Editorial practices**

The following practice has been adhered to in order to indicate at a glance the status of each statement: *Standards* have been printed in light face roman; *Recommended Practices* have been printed in light face italics, the status being indicated by the prefix **Recommendation**; *Notes* have been printed in light face italics, the status being indicated by the prefix *Note*.

The following editorial practice has been followed in the writing of specifications: for Standards the operative verb “shall” is used, and for Recommended Practices the operative verb “should” is used.

Throughout this document:

- a) measurements are given in the metric system followed in parentheses by corresponding measurements in the foot-pound system; and
- b) the use of the male gender should be understood to include male and female persons.

Any reference to a portion of this document, which is identified by a number and/or title, includes all subdivisions of that portion.

## Foreword

## Annex 12 — Search and Rescue

Table A. Amendments to Annex 12

<i>Amendment</i>	<i>Source(s)</i>	<i>Subject(s)</i>	<i>Adopted/approved Effective Applicable</i>
1st Edition	Search and Rescue Division, Second Session (1946) Air Navigation Commission	International Standards and Recommended Practices — Search and Rescue Services.	25 May 1950 1 December 1950 1 March 1951
1 (2nd Edition)	Search and Rescue Division, Third Session (1951)	Search and rescue organization; communications; appraisals of search and rescue operations; procedures for search and rescue; air-to-ground signals.	31 March 1952 1 September 1952 1 January 1953
2 (3rd Edition)	Second Air Navigation Conference (1955)	Rescue sub-centres; servicing and refuelling rescue units of other Contracting States.	8 May 1956 1 September 1956 1 December 1956
3	Third Air Navigation Conference (1956). Amendment 140 to Annex 6, Chapter 6	Marking of areas of the fuselage suitable for break-in.	13 June 1957 1 October 1957 1 December 1957
4 (4th Edition)	Rules of the Air, Air Traffic Services and Search and Rescue Divisions (1958)	Cooperation between States; information concerning emergencies; procedures for rescue coordination centres.	8 December 1959 1 May 1960 1 August 1960
5	Amendment 13 to Annex 11	Notification of rescue coordination centres by air traffic services units.	13 April 1962 — 1 November 1962
6	Amendment 4 to Annex 9	Temporary entry of rescue units from other Contracting States.	— — 1 July 1964
7	Amendment 14 to Annex 11, Chapter 5	Alerting of surface vessels and en-route aircraft to assist an aircraft in distress.	19 June 1964 1 November 1964 1 February 1965
8	International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea. Amendment 15 to Annex 11	Updating of reference; alerting service.	10 December 1965 — 25 August 1966
9 (5th Edition)	Air Navigation Commission review of the Regional Supplementary Procedures	Cooperation between Contracting States; servicing and refuelling of rescue units of other Contracting States; testing search and rescue communications facilities; assistance in search and rescue operations by additional units or services.	25 May 1970 25 September 1970 4 February 1971
10	Air Navigation Commission	Carriage of the International Code of Signals by search and rescue aircraft; equipment of search and rescue aircraft with frequency 2182 kHz; information on position of merchant ships.	11 December 1972 11 April 1973 16 August 1973

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<i>Amendment</i>	<i>Source(s)</i>	<i>Subject(s)</i>	<i>Adopted/approved Effective Applicable</i>
11 (6th Edition)	Complete review of the Annex by the Air Navigation Commission	New signal to surface craft; provision of search and rescue services on a 24-hour basis; dissemination of information on position of merchant ships; appraisals of search and rescue operations; improvement of cooperation between neighbouring States; equipment of rescue units; availability of information on air traffic services; location of droppable survival equipment; methods for assisting aircraft in distress and being compelled to ditch to rendezvous with surface craft; methods for assisting search and rescue or other aircraft to rendezvous with aircraft in distress.	25 November 1974 25 March 1975 9 October 1975
12	Amendment 60 to Annex 3	Supplementary communication facilities between meteorological offices and search and rescue units.	8 December 1975 8 April 1976 12 August 1976
13	Air Navigation Commission	Ground-air visual signal code for use by survivors.	15 December 1980 15 April 1981 26 November 1981
14	Air Navigation Commission	Rescue coordination centre (RCC) responsibilities regarding preparatory measures in the event an aircraft is subject to unlawful interference.	12 March 1990 30 July 1990 15 November 1990
15	Air Navigation Commission	Definition for search and rescue aircraft; communications requirements for rescue coordination centres (RCCs) and equipment of search and rescue (SAR) aircraft; SAR point of contact (SPOC).	12 March 1993 26 July 1993 11 November 1993
16 (7th Edition)	Amendments 25, 20 and 7 to Annex 6, Parts I, II and III, respectively; Air Navigation Commission	Revised definition of "pilot-in-command"; editorial amendments.	12 March 2001 16 July 2001 1 November 2001
17 (8th Edition)	ICAO Secretariat/Air Navigation Commission	Updating to align provisions with the IMO Convention to the extent practicable; harmonization of definitions between aeronautical and maritime SAR documents; regional approach to SAR system establishment; policy agreement between States and operational coordination between aeronautical and maritime SAR services; ready availability of essential data to RCC.	23 February 2004 12 July 2004 25 November 2004
18	Air Navigation Commission	Rescue coordination centre (RCC) responsibilities.	16 March 2007 16 July 2007 22 November 2007

## INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

*Note.— This Annex is supplemented by the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual, Volume I — Organization and Management, Volume II — Mission Co-ordination, and Volume III — Mobile Facilities (Doc 9731), the purpose of which is to assist States in meeting their search and rescue (SAR) needs and obligations accepted under the Convention on International Civil Aviation. These obligations, as they relate to the provision of SAR services, are specified in this Annex as Standards and Recommended Practices. The three volumes of the IAMSAR Manual provide guidance for a common aviation and maritime approach to organizing and providing SAR services. States are encouraged, by use of the manual, to develop and improve their SAR services and to cooperate with neighbouring States.*

### CHAPTER 1. DEFINITIONS

When the following terms are used in the Standards and Recommended Practices for search and rescue, they have the following meanings:

**Alerting post.** Any facility intended to serve as an intermediary between a person reporting an emergency and a rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre.

**Alert phase.** A situation wherein apprehension exists as to the safety of an aircraft and its occupants.

**Distress phase.** A situation wherein there is a reasonable certainty that an aircraft and its occupants are threatened by grave and imminent danger and require immediate assistance.

**Ditching.** The forced landing of an aircraft on water.

**Emergency phase.** A generic term meaning, as the case may be, uncertainty phase, alert phase or distress phase.

**Joint rescue coordination centre (JRCC).** A rescue coordination centre responsible for both aeronautical and maritime search and rescue operations.

**Operator.** A person, organization or enterprise engaged in or offering to engage in an aircraft operation.

**Pilot-in-command.** The pilot designated by the operator, or in the case of general aviation, the owner, as being in command and charged with the safe conduct of a flight.

**Rescue.** An operation to retrieve persons in distress, provide for their initial medical or other needs, and deliver them to a place of safety.

**Rescue coordination centre (RCC).** A unit responsible for promoting efficient organization of search and rescue services and for coordinating the conduct of search and rescue operations within a search and rescue region.

**Rescue subcentre (RSC).** A unit subordinate to a rescue coordination centre, established to complement the latter according to particular provisions of the responsible authorities.

**Search.** An operation normally coordinated by a rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre using available personnel and facilities to locate persons in distress.

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**Search and rescue aircraft.** An aircraft provided with specialized equipment suitable for the efficient conduct of search and rescue missions.

**Search and rescue facility.** Any mobile resource, including designated search and rescue units, used to conduct search and rescue operations.

**Search and rescue service.** The performance of distress monitoring, communication, coordination and search and rescue functions, initial medical assistance or medical evacuation, through the use of public and private resources, including cooperating aircraft, vessels and other craft and installations.

**Search and rescue region (SRR).** An area of defined dimensions, associated with a rescue coordination centre, within which search and rescue services are provided.

**Search and rescue unit.** A mobile resource composed of trained personnel and provided with equipment suitable for the expeditious conduct of search and rescue operations.

**State of Registry.** The State on whose register the aircraft is entered.

**Uncertainty phase.** A situation wherein uncertainty exists as to the safety of an aircraft and its occupants.

## CHAPTER 2. ORGANIZATION

### 2.1 Search and rescue services

2.1.1 Contracting States shall, individually or in cooperation with other States, arrange for the establishment and prompt provision of search and rescue services within their territories to ensure that assistance is rendered to persons in distress. Such services shall be provided on a 24-hour basis.

2.1.1.1 Those portions of the high seas or areas of undetermined sovereignty for which search and rescue services will be established shall be determined on the basis of regional air navigation agreements. Contracting States having accepted the responsibility to provide search and rescue services in such areas shall thereafter, individually or in cooperation with other States, arrange for the services to be established and provided in accordance with the provisions of this Annex.

*Note.— The phrase “regional air navigation agreements” refers to the agreements approved by the Council of ICAO normally on the advice of Regional Air Navigation Meetings.*

2.1.1.2 Basic elements of search and rescue services shall include a legal framework, a responsible authority, organized available resources, communication facilities and a workforce skilled in coordination and operational functions.

2.1.1.3 Search and rescue services shall establish processes to improve service provision, including the aspects of planning, domestic and international cooperative arrangements and training.

2.1.2 In providing assistance to aircraft in distress and to survivors of aircraft accidents, Contracting States shall do so regardless of the nationality or status of such persons or the circumstances in which such persons are found.

2.1.3 Contracting States having accepted responsibility to provide search and rescue services shall use search and rescue units and other available facilities to assist any aircraft or its occupants that are or appear to be in a state of emergency.

2.1.4 Where separate aeronautical and maritime rescue coordination centres serve the same area, States shall ensure the closest practicable coordination between the centres.

2.1.5 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should facilitate consistency and cooperation between their aeronautical and maritime search and rescue services.*

2.1.6 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should establish joint rescue coordination centres to coordinate aeronautical and maritime search and rescue operations, where practical.*

### 2.2 Search and rescue regions

2.2.1 Contracting States shall delineate the search and rescue regions within which they will provide search and rescue services. Such regions shall not overlap and neighbouring regions shall be contiguous.

*Note 1.— Search and rescue regions are established to ensure the provision of adequate communication infrastructure, efficient distress alert routing and proper operational coordination to effectively support search and rescue services. Neighbouring States may cooperate to establish search and rescue services within a single SAR region.*

*Note 2.— The delineation of search and rescue regions is determined on the basis of technical and operational considerations and is not related to the delineation of boundaries between States.*

2.2.1.1 **Recommendation.**— *Search and rescue regions should, in so far as practicable, be coincident with corresponding flight information regions and, with respect to those areas over the high seas, maritime search and rescue regions.*

### 2.3 Rescue coordination centres and rescue subcentres

2.3.1 Contracting States shall establish a rescue coordination centre in each search and rescue region.

*Note.— A Contracting State may establish a rescue coordination centre with an associated search and rescue region that, in accordance with regional air navigation agreement, extends over an area greater than its sovereign airspace.*

2.3.2 **Recommendation.**— *Where all or part of the airspace of a Contracting State is included within a search and rescue region associated with a rescue coordination centre in another Contracting State, that former State should establish a rescue subcentre subordinate to the rescue coordination centre wherever this would improve the efficiency of search and rescue services within its territory.*

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2.3.3 Each rescue coordination centre and, as appropriate, rescue subcentre, shall be staffed 24 hours a day by trained personnel proficient in the use of the language used for radiotelephony communications.

2.3.4 **Recommendation.**— *RCC personnel involved in the conduct of radiotelephony communications should be proficient in the use of the English language.*

2.3.5 **Recommendation.**— *In areas where public telecommunications facilities would not permit persons observing an aircraft in emergency to notify the rescue coordination centre concerned directly and promptly, Contracting States should designate suitable units of public or private services as alerting posts.*

**2.4 Search and rescue communications**

2.4.1 Each rescue coordination centre shall have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with:

- a) associated air traffic services units;
- b) associated rescue subcentres;
- c) appropriate direction-finding and position-fixing stations;
- d) where appropriate, coastal radio stations capable of alerting and communicating with surface vessels in the region;
- e) the headquarters of search and rescue units in the region;
- f) all maritime rescue coordination centres in the region and aeronautical, maritime or joint rescue coordination centres in adjacent regions;
- g) a designated meteorological office or meteorological watch office;
- h) search and rescue units;
- i) alerting posts; and
- j) the Cospas-Sarsat Mission Control Centre servicing the search and rescue region.

*Note.*— *Maritime rescue coordination centres are identified in relevant documents of the International Maritime Organization.*

2.4.2 Each rescue subcentre shall have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with:

- a) adjacent rescue subcentres;

- b) a meteorological office or meteorological watch office;
- c) search and rescue units; and
- d) alerting posts.

**2.5 Search and rescue units**

2.5.1 Contracting States shall designate as search and rescue units elements of public or private services suitably located and equipped for search and rescue operations.

*Note.*— *The minimum units and facilities necessary for provision of search and rescue operations within a search and rescue region are determined by regional air navigation agreements and are specified in the appropriate Air Navigation Plan and Facilities and Services Implementation Document publications.*

2.5.2 Contracting States shall designate as parts of the search and rescue plan of operation, elements of public or private services that do not qualify as search and rescue units but are nevertheless able to participate in search and rescue operations.

**2.6 Search and rescue equipment**

2.6.1 Search and rescue units shall be provided with equipment for locating promptly, and for providing adequate assistance at, the scene of an accident.

2.6.2 **Recommendation.**— *Each search and rescue unit should have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with other search and rescue facilities engaged in the same operation.*

2.6.3 Each search and rescue aircraft shall be equipped to be able to communicate on the aeronautical distress and on-scene frequencies and on such other frequencies as may be prescribed.

2.6.4 Each search and rescue aircraft shall be equipped with a device for homing on distress frequencies.

*Note 1.* — *Emergency locator transmitter (ELT) carriage requirements are given in Annex 6, Parts I, II and III.*

*Note 2.*— *Specifications for ELTs are given in Annex 10, Volume III.*

2.6.5 Each search and rescue aircraft, when used for search and rescue over maritime areas, shall be equipped to be able to communicate with vessels.

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*Note.— Many vessels can communicate with aircraft on 2182 kHz, 4125 kHz and 121.5 MHz. However, these frequencies, and in particular 121.5 MHz, may not be routinely monitored by vessels.*

2.6.6 Each search and rescue aircraft, when used for search and rescue over maritime areas shall carry a copy of the *International Code of Signals* to enable it to overcome language difficulties that may be experienced in communicating with ships.

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*Note.— The International Code of Signals is published in English, French and Spanish by the International Maritime Organization as documents 1994E, 1995F and 1996S.*

2.6.7 **Recommendation.**— *Unless it is known that there is no need to provide supplies to survivors by air, at least one of the aircraft participating in a search and rescue operation should carry droppable survival equipment.*

2.6.8 **Recommendation.**— *States should locate, at appropriate aerodromes, survival equipment suitably packed for dropping by aircraft.*

## CHAPTER 3. COOPERATION

### 3.1 Cooperation between States

3.1.1 Contracting States shall coordinate their search and rescue organizations with those of neighbouring States.

3.1.2 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should, whenever necessary, coordinate their search and rescue operations with those of neighbouring States especially when these operations are proximate to adjacent search and rescue regions.*

3.1.2.1 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should, in so far as practicable, develop common search and rescue plans and procedures to facilitate coordination of search and rescue operations with those of neighbouring States.*

3.1.3 Subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by its own authorities, a Contracting State shall permit immediate entry into its territory of search and rescue units of other States for the purpose of searching for the site of aircraft accidents and rescuing survivors of such accidents.

3.1.4 The authorities of a Contracting State who wish their search and rescue units to enter the territory of another Contracting State for search and rescue purposes shall transmit a request, giving full details of the projected mission and the need for it, to the rescue coordination centre of the State concerned or to such other authority as has been designated by that State.

3.1.4.1 The authorities of Contracting States shall:

- immediately acknowledge the receipt of such a request, and
- as soon as possible, indicate the conditions, if any, under which the projected mission may be undertaken.

3.1.5 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should enter into agreements with neighbouring States to strengthen search and rescue cooperation and coordination, setting forth the conditions for entry of each other's search and rescue units into their respective territories. These agreements should also provide for expediting entry of such units with the least possible formalities.*

3.1.6 **Recommendation.**— *Each Contracting State should authorize its rescue coordination centres to:*

- a) *request from other rescue coordination centres such assistance, including aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment, as may be needed;*
- b) *grant any necessary permission for the entry of such aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment into its territory; and*
- c) *make the necessary arrangements with the appropriate customs, immigration or other authorities with a view to expediting such entry.*

3.1.7 **Recommendation.**— *Each Contracting State should authorize its rescue coordination centres to provide, when requested, assistance to other rescue coordination centres, including assistance in the form of aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment.*

3.1.8 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should make arrangements for joint training exercises involving their search and rescue units, those of other States and operators, in order to promote search and rescue efficiency.*

3.1.9 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should make arrangements for periodic liaison visits by personnel of their rescue coordination centres and subcentres to the centres of neighbouring States.*

### 3.2 Cooperation with other services

3.2.1 Contracting States shall arrange for all aircraft, vessels and local services and facilities which do not form part of the search and rescue organization to cooperate fully with the latter in search and rescue and to extend any possible assistance to the survivors of aircraft accidents.

3.2.2 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should ensure the closest practicable coordination between the relevant aeronautical and maritime authorities to provide for the most effective and efficient search and rescue services.*

3.2.3 Contracting States shall ensure that their search and rescue services cooperate with those responsible for investigating accidents and with those responsible for the care of those who suffered from the accident.

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3.2.4 **Recommendation.**— *To facilitate accident investigation, rescue units should, when practicable, be accompanied by persons qualified in the conduct of aircraft accident + investigations.*

3.2.5 States shall designate a search and rescue point of contact for the receipt of Cospas-Sarsat distress data.

**3.3 Dissemination of information**

3.3.1 Each Contracting State shall publish and disseminate all information necessary for the entry of search and rescue units of other States into its territory or, alternatively,

include this information in search and rescue service arrangements.

3.3.2 **Recommendation.**— *When such information could benefit the provision of search and rescue services, Contracting States should make available, through the rescue coordination centres or other agencies, information regarding their search and rescue plans of operation.*

3.3.3 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should, to the extent desirable and practicable, disseminate information to the general public and emergency response authorities regarding actions to be taken when there is reason to believe that an aircraft's emergency situation may become cause for public concern or require a general emergency response.*

## CHAPTER 4. PREPARATORY MEASURES

### 4.1 Preparatory information

4.1.1 Each rescue coordination centre shall have readily available at all times up-to-date information concerning the following in respect of its search and rescue region:

- a) search and rescue units, rescue subcentres and alerting posts;
- b) air traffic services units;
- c) means of communication that may be used in search and rescue operations;
- d) addresses and telephone numbers of all operators, or their designated representatives, engaged in operations in the region; and
- e) any other public and private resources including medical and transportation facilities that are likely to be useful in search and rescue.

4.1.2 **Recommendation.**— *Each rescue coordination centre should have readily available all other information of interest to search and rescue, including information regarding:*

- a) *the locations, call signs, hours of watch, and frequencies of all radio stations likely to be employed in support of search and rescue operations;*
- b) *the locations and hours of watch of services keeping radio watch, and the frequencies guarded;*
- c) *locations where supplies of droppable emergency and survival equipment are stored; and*
- d) *objects which it is known might be mistaken for unlocated or unreported wreckage, particularly if viewed from the air.*

4.1.3 **Recommendation.**— *Each rescue coordination centre whose search and rescue region includes maritime areas should have ready access to information regarding the position, course and speed of ships within such areas that may be able to provide assistance to aircraft in distress and information on how to contact them.*

*Note.*— *This information may either be kept in the rescue coordination centres or be readily accessible*

4.1.4 **Recommendation.**— *Contracting States should, individually or in cooperation with other States, either establish ship reporting systems in cooperation with maritime authorities or arrange communication links with Amver or regional ship reporting systems to facilitate search and rescue operations at sea.*

*Note.*— *Amver is a cooperative international ship reporting system with worldwide coverage that is available for interrogation by all rescue coordination centres. A number of Contracting States also operate regional ship reporting systems.*

### 4.2 Plans of operation

4.2.1 Each rescue coordination centre shall prepare detailed plans of operation for the conduct of search and rescue operations within its search and rescue region.

4.2.2 **Recommendation.**— *Search and rescue plans of operations should be developed jointly with representatives of the operators and other public or private services that may assist in providing search and rescue services or benefit from them, taking into account that the number of survivors could be large.*

4.2.3 The plans of operation shall specify arrangements for the servicing and refuelling, to the extent possible, of aircraft, vessels and vehicles employed in search and rescue operations, including those made available by other States.

4.2.4 The search and rescue plans of operation shall contain details regarding actions to be taken by those persons engaged in search and rescue, including:

- a) the manner in which search and rescue operations are to be conducted in the search and rescue region;
- b) the use of available communication systems and facilities;
- c) the actions to be taken jointly with other rescue coordination centres;
- d) the methods of alerting en-route aircraft and ships at sea;
- e) the duties and prerogatives of persons assigned to search and rescue;
- f) the possible redeployment of equipment that may be necessitated by meteorological or other conditions;

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- g) the methods for obtaining essential information relevant to search and rescue operations, such as weather reports and forecasts, appropriate NOTAM, etc.;
- h) the methods for obtaining, from other rescue coordination centres, such assistance, including aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment, as may be needed;
- i) the methods for assisting distressed aircraft being compelled to ditch to rendezvous with surface craft;
- j) the methods for assisting search and rescue or other aircraft to proceed to aircraft in distress; and
- k) cooperative actions to be taken in conjunction with air traffic services units and other authorities concerned to assist aircraft known or believed to be subject to unlawful interference.

4.2.5 **Recommendation.**— *Search and rescue plans of operation should be integrated with airport emergency plans to provide for rescue services in the vicinity of aerodromes including, for coastal aerodromes, areas of water.*

**4.3 Search and rescue units**

4.3.1 Each search and rescue unit shall:

- a) be cognizant of all parts of the plans of operation prescribed in 4.2 that are necessary for the effective conduct of its duties; and

- b) keep the rescue coordination centre informed of its preparedness.

4.3.2 Contracting States shall:

- a) maintain in readiness the required number of search and rescue facilities; and
- b) maintain adequate supplies of rations, medical stores, signalling devices and other survival and rescue equipment.

**4.4 Training and exercises**

To achieve and maintain maximum efficiency in search and rescue, Contracting States shall provide for regular training of their search and rescue personnel and arrange appropriate search and rescue exercises.

**4.5 Wreckage**

**Recommendation.**— *Each Contracting State should ensure that wreckage resulting from aircraft accidents within its territory or, in the case of accidents on the high seas or in areas of undetermined sovereignty, within the search and rescue regions for which it is responsible, is removed, obliterated or charted following completion of the accident investigation, if its presence might constitute a hazard or confuse subsequent search and rescue operations.*

## CHAPTER 5. OPERATING PROCEDURES

### 5.1 Information concerning emergencies

5.1.1 Any authority or any element of the search and rescue organization having reason to believe that an aircraft is in an emergency shall give immediately all available information to the rescue coordination centre concerned.

5.1.2 Rescue coordination centres shall, immediately upon receipt of information concerning aircraft in emergency, evaluate such information and assess the extent of the operation required.

5.1.3 When information concerning aircraft in emergency is received from other sources than air traffic services units, the rescue coordination centre shall determine to which emergency phase the situation corresponds and shall apply the procedures applicable to that phase.

### 5.2 Procedures for rescue coordination centres during emergency phases

#### 5.2.1 Uncertainty phase

Upon the occurrence of an uncertainty phase, the rescue coordination centre shall cooperate to the utmost with air traffic services units and other appropriate agencies and services in order that incoming reports may be speedily evaluated.

#### 5.2.2 Alert phase

Upon the occurrence of an alert phase the rescue coordination centre shall immediately alert search and rescue units and initiate any necessary action.

#### 5.2.3 Distress phase

Upon the occurrence of a distress phase, the rescue coordination centre shall:

- a) immediately initiate action by search and rescue units in accordance with the appropriate plan of operation;
- b) ascertain the position of the aircraft, estimate the degree of uncertainty of this position, and, on the basis of this

information and the circumstances, determine the extent of the area to be searched;

- c) notify the operator, where possible, and keep the operator informed of developments;
- d) notify other rescue coordination centres, the help of which seems likely to be required, or which may be concerned in the operation;
- e) notify the associated air traffic services unit, when the information on the emergency has been received from another source;
- f) request at an early stage such aircraft, vessels, coastal stations and other services not specifically included in the appropriate plan of operation and able to assist to:
  - 1) maintain a listening watch for transmissions from the aircraft in distress, survival radio equipment or an ELT;

*Note.— The frequencies contained in the specifications for ELTs given in Annex 10, Volume III, are 121.5 MHz and 406 MHz.*

- 2) assist the aircraft in distress as far as practicable; and
- 3) inform the rescue coordination centre of any developments;
- g) from the information available, draw up a detailed plan of action for the conduct of the search and/or rescue operation required and communicate such plan for the guidance of the authorities immediately directing the conduct of such an operation;
- h) amend as necessary, in the light of evolving circumstances, the detailed plan of action;
- i) notify the appropriate accident investigation authorities; and
- j) notify the State of Registry of the aircraft.

The order in which these actions are described shall be followed unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

**Annex 12 — Search and Rescue****Chapter 5****5.2.4 Initiation of search and rescue action  
in respect of an aircraft  
whose position is unknown**

In the event that an emergency phase is declared in respect of an aircraft whose position is unknown and may be in one of two or more search and rescue regions, the following shall apply:

- a) When a rescue coordination centre is notified of the existence of an emergency phase and is unaware of other centres taking appropriate action, it shall assume responsibility for initiating suitable action in accordance with 5.2 and confer with neighbouring rescue coordination centres with the objective of designating one rescue coordination centre to assume responsibility forthwith.
- b) Unless otherwise decided by common agreement of the rescue coordination centres concerned, the rescue coordination centre to coordinate search and rescue action shall be the centre responsible for:
  - the region in which the aircraft last reported its position; or
  - the region to which the aircraft was proceeding when its last reported position was on the line separating two search and rescue regions; or
  - the region to which the aircraft was destined when it was not equipped with suitable two-way radio communication or not under obligation to maintain radio communication; or
  - the region in which the distress site is located as identified by the Cospas-Sarsat system.
- c) After declaration of the distress phase, the rescue coordination centre with overall coordination responsibility shall inform all rescue coordination centres that may become involved in the operation of all the circumstances of the emergency and subsequent developments. Likewise, all rescue coordination centres becoming aware of any information pertaining to the emergency shall inform the rescue coordination centre that has overall responsibility.

**5.2.5 Passing of information to aircraft in respect  
of which an emergency phase has been declared**

Whenever applicable, the rescue coordination centre responsible for search and rescue action shall forward to the air traffic services unit serving the flight information region in which the aircraft is operating, information of the search and rescue action initiated, in order that such information can be passed to the aircraft.

**5.3 Procedures where responsibility for  
operations extends to two or more  
Contracting States**

Where the conduct of operations over the entire search and rescue region is the responsibility of more than one Contracting State, each involved State shall take action in accordance with the relevant plan of operations when so requested by the rescue coordination centre of the region.

**5.4 Procedures for  
authorities in the field**

The authorities immediately directing the conduct of operations or any part thereof shall:

- a) give instructions to the units under their direction and inform the rescue coordination centre of such instructions; and
- b) keep the rescue coordination centre informed of developments.

**5.5 Procedures for rescue coordination  
centres — termination and suspension  
of operations**

5.5.1 Search and rescue operations shall continue, when practicable, until all survivors are delivered to a place of safety or until all reasonable hope of rescuing survivors has passed.

5.5.2 The responsible rescue coordination centre shall normally be responsible for determining when to discontinue search and rescue operations.

*Note.— Contracting States may require input from other appropriate State authorities in the decision-making process leading to termination of SAR operations.*

5.5.3 When a search and rescue operation has been successful or when a rescue coordination centre considers, or is informed, that an emergency no longer exists, the emergency phase shall be cancelled, the search and rescue operation shall be terminated and any authority, facility or service that has been activated or notified shall be promptly informed.

5.5.4 If a search and rescue operation becomes impracticable and the rescue coordination centre concludes that there might still be survivors, the centre shall temporarily suspend on-scene activities pending further developments and shall promptly inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified. Relevant information subsequently received shall be evaluated and search and rescue operations resumed when justified and practicable.

## Chapter 5

## Annex 12 — Search and Rescue

**5.6 Procedures at the scene of an accident**

5.6.1 When multiple facilities are engaged in search and rescue operations on-scene, the rescue coordination centre or rescue subcentre shall designate one or more units on-scene to coordinate all actions to help ensure the safety and effectiveness of air and surface operations, taking into account facility capabilities and operational requirements.

5.6.2 When a pilot-in-command observes that either another aircraft or a surface craft is in distress, the pilot shall, if possible and unless considered unreasonable or unnecessary:

- a) keep the craft in distress in sight until compelled to leave the scene or advised by the rescue coordination centre that it is no longer necessary;
- b) determine the position of the craft in distress;
- c) as appropriate, report to the rescue coordination centre or air traffic services unit as much of the following information as possible:
  - type of craft in distress, its identification and condition;
  - its position, expressed in geographical or grid coordinates or in distance and true bearing from a distinctive landmark or from a radio navigation aid;
  - time of observation expressed in hours and minutes Coordinated Universal Time (UTC);
  - number of persons observed;
  - whether persons have been seen to abandon the craft in distress;
  - on-scene weather conditions;
  - apparent physical condition of survivors;
  - apparent best ground access route to the distress site; and
- d) act as instructed by the rescue coordination centre or the air traffic services unit.

5.6.2.1 If the first aircraft to reach the scene of an accident is not a search and rescue aircraft, it shall take charge of on-scene activities of all other aircraft subsequently arriving until the first search and rescue aircraft reaches the scene of the accident. If, in the meantime, such aircraft is unable to establish communication with the appropriate rescue coordination centre or air traffic services unit, it shall, by mutual agreement, hand over to an aircraft capable of establishing and maintaining such communications until the arrival of the first search and rescue aircraft.

5.6.3 When it is necessary for an aircraft to convey information to survivors or surface rescue units, and two-way communication is not available, it shall, if practicable, drop communication equipment that would enable direct contact to be established, or convey the information by dropping a hard copy message.

5.6.4 When a ground signal has been displayed, the aircraft shall indicate whether the signal has been understood or not by the means described in 5.6.3 or, if this is not practicable, by making the appropriate visual signal.

5.6.5 When it is necessary for an aircraft to direct a surface craft to the place where an aircraft or surface craft is in distress, the aircraft shall do so by transmitting precise instructions by any means at its disposal. If no radio communication can be established, the aircraft shall make the appropriate visual signal.

*Note.— Air-to-surface and surface-to-air visual signals are published in Volume III of Doc 9731.*

**5.7 Procedures for a pilot-in-command intercepting a distress transmission**

Whenever a distress transmission is intercepted by a pilot-in-command of an aircraft, the pilot shall, if feasible:

- a) acknowledge the distress transmission;
- b) record the position of the craft in distress if given;
- c) take a bearing on the transmission;
- d) inform the appropriate rescue coordination centre or air traffic services unit of the distress transmission, giving all available information; and
- e) at the pilot's discretion, while awaiting instructions, proceed to the position given in the transmission.

**5.8 Search and rescue signals**

5.8.1 The air-to-surface and surface-to-air visual signals in the Appendix shall, when used, have the meaning indicated therein. They shall be used only for the purpose indicated and no other signals likely to be confused with them shall be used.

5.8.2 Upon observing any of the signals in the Appendix, aircraft shall take such action as may be required by the interpretation of the signal given in that Appendix.

**5.9 Maintenance of records**

5.9.1 **Recommendation.**— *Each rescue coordination centre should keep a record of the operational efficiency of the search and rescue organization in its region.*

5.9.2 **Recommendation.**— *Each rescue coordination centre should prepare appraisals of actual search and rescue operations in its region. These appraisals should comprise any pertinent remarks on the procedures used and on the emergency and survival equipment, and any suggestions for improvement of those procedures and equipment. Those appraisals which are likely to be of interest to other States should be submitted to ICAO for information and dissemination as appropriate.*

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## APPENDIX. SEARCH AND RESCUE SIGNALS

*(Note.— See Chapter 5, 5.8 of the Annex)*

### 1. Signals with surface craft

1.1 The following manoeuvres performed in sequence by an aircraft mean that the aircraft wishes to direct a surface craft towards an aircraft or a surface craft in distress:

- a) circling the surface craft at least once;
- b) crossing the projected course of the surface craft close ahead at low altitude and:
  - 1) rocking the wings; or
  - 2) opening and closing the throttle; or
  - 3) changing the propeller pitch.

*Note.— Due to high noise level on board surface craft, the sound signals in 2) and 3) may be less effective than the visual signal in 1) and are regarded as alternative means of attracting attention.*

- c) heading in the direction in which the surface craft is to be directed.

Repetition of such manoeuvres has the same meaning.

1.2 The following manoeuvres by an aircraft means that the assistance of the surface craft to which the signal is directed is no longer required:

- crossing the wake of the surface craft close astern at a low altitude and:
  - 1) rocking the wings; or
  - 2) opening and closing the throttle; or
  - 3) changing the propeller pitch.

*Note.— The following replies may be made by surface craft to the signal in 1.1:*

- for acknowledging receipt of signals:

1) the hoisting of the “code pennant” (vertical red and white stripes) close up (meaning understood);

2) the flashing of a succession of “T’s” by signal lamp in the Morse code;

3) the changing of heading to follow the aircraft.

— for indicating inability to comply:

1) the hoisting of the international flag “N” (a blue and white checkered square);

2) the flashing of a succession of “N’s” in the Morse code.

*Note.— See Note following 1.1 b), 3).*

### 2. Ground-air visual signal code

#### 2.1 Ground-air visual signal code for use by survivors

No.	Message	Code symbol
1	Require assistance	V
2	Require medical assistance	X
3	No or Negative	N
4	Yes or Affirmative	Y
5	Proceeding in this direction	↑

**Annex 12 — Search and Rescue****Appendix****2.2 Ground-air visual signal code  
for use by rescue units**

No.	Message	Code symbol
1	Operation completed	LLL
2	We have found all personnel	<u>LL</u>
3	We have found only some personnel	++
4	We are not able to continue. Returning to base	XX
5	Have divided into two groups. Each proceeding in direction indicated	
6	Information received that aircraft is in this direction	
7	Nothing found. Will continue to search	NN

2.3 Symbols shall be at least 2.5 metres (8 feet) long and shall be made as conspicuous as possible.

*Note 1.— Symbols may be formed by any means such as: strips of fabric, parachute material, pieces of wood, stones or such like material; marking the surface by tramping, or staining with oil.*

*Note 2.— Attention to the above signals may be attracted by other means such as radio, flares, smoke and reflected light.*

**3. Air-to-ground signals**

3.1 The following signals by aircraft mean that the ground signals have been understood:

a) during the hours of daylight:

— by rocking the aircraft's wings;

b) during the hours of darkness:

— flashing on and off twice the aircraft's landing lights or, if not so equipped, by switching on and off twice its navigation lights.

3.2 Lack of the above signal indicates that the ground signal is not understood.

— END —

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**International Standards and Recommended Practices** are adopted by the Council in accordance with Articles 54, 37 and 90 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation and are designated, for convenience, as Annexes to the Convention. The uniform application by Contracting States of the specifications contained in the International Standards is recognized as necessary for the safety or regularity of international air navigation while the uniform application of the specifications in the Recommended Practices is regarded as desirable in the interest of safety, regularity or efficiency of international air navigation. Knowledge of any differences between the national regulations or practices of a State and those established by an International Standard is essential to the safety or regularity of international air navigation. In the event of non-compliance with an International Standard, a State has, in fact, an obligation, under Article 38 of the Convention, to notify the Council of any differences. Knowledge of differences from Recommended Practices may also be important for the safety of air navigation and, although the Convention does not impose any obligation with regard thereto, the Council has invited Contracting States to notify such differences in addition to those relating to International Standards.

**Procedures for Air Navigation Services (PANS)** are approved by the Council for worldwide application. They contain, for the most part, operating procedures regarded as not yet having attained a sufficient degree of

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**Regional Supplementary Procedures (SUPPS)** have a status similar to that of PANS in that they are approved by the Council, but only for application in the respective regions. They are prepared in consolidated form, since certain of the procedures apply to overlapping regions or are common to two or more regions.

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*The following publications are prepared by authority of the Secretary General in accordance with the principles and policies approved by the Council.*

**Technical Manuals** provide guidance and information in amplification of the International Standards, Recommended Practices and PANS, the implementation of which they are designed to facilitate.

**Air Navigation Plans** detail requirements for facilities and services for international air navigation in the respective ICAO Air Navigation Regions. They are prepared on the authority of the Secretary General on the basis of recommendations of regional air navigation meetings and of the Council action thereon. The plans are amended periodically to reflect changes in requirements and in the status of implementation of the recommended facilities and services.

**ICAO Circulars** make available specialized information of interest to Contracting States. This includes studies on technical subjects.











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