



16100

NOV 14 2000

From: Commandant  
To: Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District  
Via: Commander, Atlantic Area

Subj: SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) STANDARDS REVIEW

Ref: (a) CCGD9 ltr 16130 dtd 20 DEC 99  
(b) Coast Guard Addendum to the National SAR Manual, COMDTINST M16130.2B

1. In response to your recommendation in reference (a) for a review of the SAR response standard, I directed the Office of Search and Rescue to provide me with information regarding the basis of that standard and its viability. Based on that information, I do not believe a formal review of the SAR response standard is necessary. The following paragraphs detail the basis of my assessment.

2. The response standard was most recently reviewed in 1993. The results of that review are provided as enclosure (1). That review concluded the response standard is reasonable and appropriate. It provided the historical basis of the standard; explained the approach used to verify the factors applied in establishing the standard; detailed the standard's environmental foundation and how that was the key to the selection of two hours for the standard; and confirmed the analytical nature of the standard.

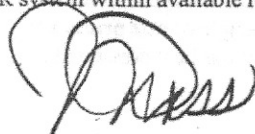
3. The Coast Guard's use of a single uniform response standard is founded on these key principles.

- a. First, mariners should be responsible for equipping themselves for the location and climate in which they operate. This concept is not new to the Coast Guard. It is found in our implementation of vessel safety regulations, which require a survival suit for each person on board certain vessels when operating in colder waters. It is also found in regulations regarding additional equipment for vessels operating greater distances offshore and in different trades. The Coast Guard itself applies this same basic principle of safe practice to our own boat crews by prescribing protective clothing guidelines for our boat crews and offshore distance restrictions for lesser equipped boats.
- b. Second, if mariners take responsibility for preparing properly to survive, they can then rely on the Coast Guard to have SAR resources (Coast Guard or other SAR system partners) reach them within the established two hour response standard. We recognize that some areas will not be reached in two hours and have accounted for that in a statement prepared for the Addendum (reference (b)). It reads, "This response standard may not be met in all

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areas over which the Coast Guard has the responsibility for SAR coordination, including vast areas of open ocean (both Atlantic and Pacific) and remote areas with little or no SAR demand."

- c. Third, the SAR system exists in multiple layers. As you know, we use both air and surface assets to provide the two hour coverage. In some areas, the presence of one mode is sufficient for the level of service required, while in other areas multiple layers are needed due to the risk involved. In addition to Coast Guard resources, we rely on other federal, state, local and volunteer agencies to provide coverage and strengthen the system. This added layer is generally not considered when applying our two hour response standard but rather acts as reinforcement.
  - d. Finally, a single established response standard provides a uniform starting point for asset allocation. It provides a disciplined methodology that allocates scarce search and rescue resources throughout the United States and its territories balanced against an acceptable level of risk.
4. How the response standard impacts the Coast Guard's SAR mission performance is a critical indicator of its viability. An examination of the effect of our response standard on our primary safety goal of saving lives was made by comparing the results for each district for fiscal years 1995 through 1999. The results, provided as enclosure (2), indicate no significant difference between "cold-water" and "warm-water" districts. In fact, the colder climates performance measures are better than some warmer climates.
5. Lastly, the Coast Guard's SAR response standard has proven to be defensible within the government and with the general public. This has been facilitated by the ease with which the standard can be applied, explained and understood.
6. Thank you for your thoughtful suggestion. It has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on a critical performance standard. I fully appreciate the Coast Guard's need to align resources with demand. We are committed to maintaining standards that not only make sense, but also provide for the strongest possible SAR system within available resources.



**Terry M. Cross**  
Assistant Commandant for Operations

Encl: (1) G-N memo 16100 dtd 11 JAN 93  
(2) Lives saved goal by CG District; fiscal years 1995 - 1999



# Memorandum

Subject: SAR PROGRAM STANDARDS

Date:

JAN 1 1993

16100

From: Chief, Office of Navigation Safety  
and Waterway Services

Reply to: G-NRS-1  
Attn. of: R. Schaefer  
267-1559

To: Chief of Staff

Ref: (a) G-CPP memo 16000 of 2 OCT 92

1. In response to reference (a) and a verbal query from the Commandant, the Program Branch of the Search and Rescue Division conducted an in depth review of the Coast Guard Search and Rescue (SAR) Response Standard, enclosure (1). They have concluded that the current two hour SAR Response Standard is reasonable and should continue to be used. In general, I concur with this assessment; overall, if we wish to set one standard for the entire Coast Guard, two-hour response is most appropriate.

2. As you will note from the data in the report, water temperature is the primary determinant of survivability, and water temperature varies significantly by location and time of year. In light of this, I believe it appropriate to review our standard to determine if it should be adjusted geographically and/or seasonally. We currently plan for further review of SAR program standards during the search theory review planned to begin in FY95 as part of the Improvement of Search and Rescue Capabilities (ISARC) Project at the R&D Center.

3. Paragraph two of reference (a) requests the methodology, rationale and analysis used in determining the Coast Guard's B-0 aircraft requirements be compiled and forwarded to G-CPP. G-NRS and G-CPP staffs have conferred and agreed that the facilities manager for aircraft, G-OAV, would be the appropriate source for this information.

4. There is still much work to do. In our FY95 Issues, we intend to discuss how we might apply a "clean sheet of paper" design to a SAR (and other program) response capability in a geographic area. One factor to be used would be the SAR Response Standard(s) for the area and season, as appropriate, versus an array of various response asset (cutter, boat, aircraft, etc.) capabilities. In areas with large seasonal variations in water temperature, this analysis should also

*Never done*

assist us in assessing the costs and practicality of designing for worst case (lowest temperature situations), using additional seasonal response assets, and/or applying additional safety regulations (e.g., mandatory wearing of survival suits).

5. In view of the Commandant's interest in SAR Program Standards, I suggest this report be forwarded.

  
W. U. ECKER

Encl: (1) G-NRS memo 16100 of 24 DEC 92