

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

4 ALBERT EMBANKMENT  
LONDON SE1 7SR

Telephone: 0171-735 7611  
Fax: 0171-587 3210  
Telex: 23588 IMOLDN G



*E*

Ref. T2/5.01

MSC/Circ.892  
16 December 1998

## ALERTING OF SEARCH AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventieth session (7 to 11 December 1998), approved operating guidelines for masters of ships in distress and urgency situations, given in the annex, for use in training shipmasters, officers and key shore-based personnel in SAR procedures, to ensure early notification of SAR authorities when involved in emergency situations.

2 Member Governments are invited to bring the annexed guidelines to the attention of shipmasters, officers, key shore-based personnel and any other parties concerned.

\*\*\*

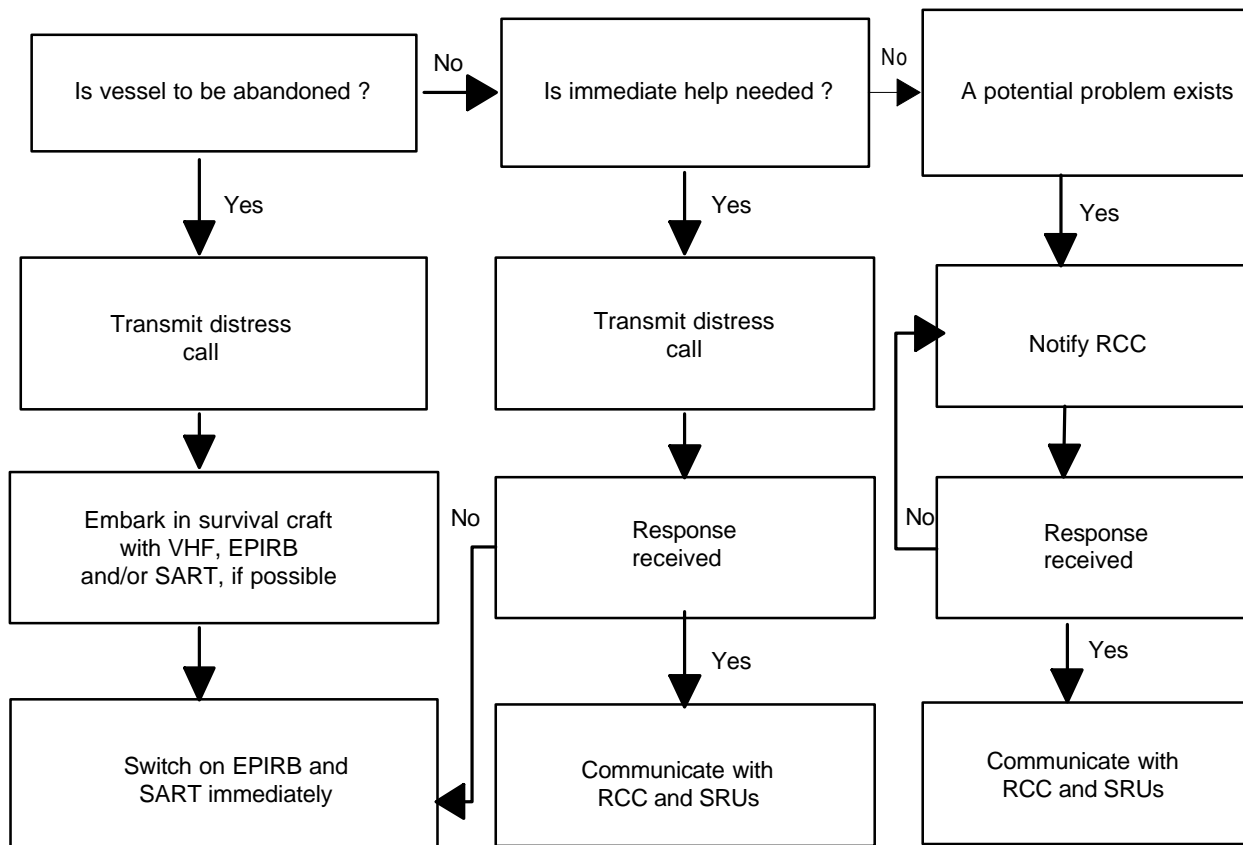


**ANNEX****ALERTING THE SEARCH AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES**

- 1 The need for the earliest possible alerting of the search and rescue (SAR) co-ordination authority to maritime emergencies cannot be over-emphasised.
- 2 It is essential to enable shore-based facilities to respond without delay to any situation which constitutes, or has the potential to constitute, a danger to life. Time lost in the initial stages of an incident may be crucial to its eventual outcome. It cannot be regained.
- 3 Factors to be considered include position (in relation to hazards and to shore-based or other SAR units); time of day; weather conditions (actual & forecast); the number of persons at risk or potentially at risk; specific assistance required, etc.
- 4 It is always best to consider the 'worst-case scenario' and to alert the SAR organisation accordingly. Depending on the circumstances, the co-ordinating authority may choose to alert or despatch SAR facilities as a precautionary measure and/or to reduce transit times. If assistance is not subsequently required, any such positive response can be easily curtailed. But time lost through delays in notification can *never* be regained.
- 5 It is therefore essential that the SAR co-ordinating authority be informed *immediately* of:
  - .1 all maritime SAR incidents;
  - .2 any situation which may develop into a SAR incident; and
  - .3 any incident which may involve or lead to danger to life, the environment or to property which may require action from the SAR services and/or other authorities.

**Operating guidance for masters of ships in distress or urgency situations\***

6 The following diagram shows standard procedures for distress/urgency message routing. It is for guidance only, and does not preclude the use of any and all available means of distress alerting.



---

\*To be considered in conjunction with IMO publication 969 - GMDSS Operating Guidance for Masters of Ships in Distress Situations (COM/Circ.108 of 23 January 1992).

### Operating guidance for masters of ships observing another vessel apparently in danger

7 The following diagram shows suggested procedures for reporting concerns about the safety of another vessel (fire, smoke, adrift, navigating towards a danger, etc.).

