

Section 4.1

Maritime SAR Assistance Policy (MSAP)

This section sets forth policy and procedures for handling requests for any type of Search and Rescue (SAR) assistance from the Coast Guard and defines Coast Guard relationships with other possible sources of assistance. It establishes internal Coast Guard policy guidance only and is not intended to confer any right or benefit nor create any obligation or duty to the general public.

4.1.1 Preamble

The MSAP is the result of an effort enacted by Congress in 1982. It directed the Commandant to “review Coast Guard policies and procedures for towing and salvage of disabled vessels in order to further minimize the possibility of Coast Guard competition or interference with...commercial enterprise.” The review was directed because of congressional concern that Coast Guard resources were being used unnecessarily to provide non-emergency assistance to disabled vessels that could be adequately performed by the private sector.

The MSAP represents more than a decade of development of relationships among the Coast Guard, Congress, the commercial towing industry, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Each iterative revision of the MSAP has received close scrutiny. It has been a give-and-take process culminating in a policy that is equitable to all stakeholders.

Problems have often arisen when individuals or groups have interpreted the MSAP to fit their own particular situation or personal agenda. This contradicts the aim of the policy and creates unnecessary conflict amongst those for whom it was intended to serve. The key is to follow the policy as it is intended, to seek clarification where necessary, and to collectively ensure that the disabled and/or endangered mariner gets fair, reasonable, and consistent service throughout the United States. However, in order to clarify some of the more often misinterpreted aspects of the MSAP, notes have been added.

4.1.2 Definitions

4.1.2.1 Coast Guard Resources: Includes active duty personnel; reserve personnel when serving under any form of active or inactive duty orders; auxiliary personnel when serving under orders; cutters; boats; aircraft; and equipment of active duty, reserve, and auxiliary Coast Guard units.

4.1.2.2 Emergency Phase: Classification made by the SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) upon receiving a request for assistance. The three emergency phases; i.e., UNCERTAINTY, ALERT, and DISTRESS, are described in Reference (a). A shortened definition of each is:

- (a) An UNCERTAINTY phase exists when there is knowledge of a situation that may need to be monitored, or to have more information gathered, but that does not require moving resources.
- (b) An ALERT phase exists when a craft or person is experiencing some difficulty and may need assistance, but is not in immediate danger or in need of immediate response. Apprehension is usually associated with the ALERT phase.

(c) The DISTRESS phase exists when grave or imminent danger requiring immediate response to the distress scene threatens a craft or person.

4.1.2.3 On Scene: When the assisting resource has completed any necessary transit to the vessel requiring assistance.

4.1.2.4 Safe Haven: A Safe Haven is considered a place that can accommodate and will accept the safe mooring of the vessel.

4.1.3 Background

4.1.3.1 Coast Guard Mission. The Coast Guard promotes safety on, over, and under the high seas and navigable waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. The Coast Guard is authorized by law to develop, establish, maintain, and operate search and rescue facilities. The Coast Guard is authorized to perform any and all acts necessary to rescue and aid persons; and to protect and save property at any time and at any place where its facilities and personnel are available and can be effectively used. However, there is no legal obligation for the Coast Guard to undertake any particular rescue mission.

4.1.3.2 Coast Guard Auxiliary Mission. The Coast Guard Auxiliary is a volunteer, non-military organization of civilians under the direction and administration of the Coast Guard. The functions of the Auxiliary include promoting safety and effecting rescues on the high seas and U.S. navigable waters. Auxiliary operational facilities are excellent resources that can, within their capabilities, enhance the Coast Guard's ability to respond to maritime emergencies. The Auxiliary has a proud tradition of support to the Coast Guard and help to mariners who need assistance on the water.

4.1.3.3 Other Assistance Available. The Coast Guard has often been the only source of readily available assistance to recreational boaters. However, commercial and additional volunteer sources of assistance exist and are capable and willing to provide various services to mariners. Additionally, other federal agencies and many state, county, and local governments have resources which may be capable and willing to assist the Coast Guard or otherwise provide assistance to mariners.

4.1.3.4 Commercial Operator's License Required. 46 U.S.C. § 8904 requires the operator of any vessel that tows a disabled vessel for compensation to have a valid license to operate that type of vessel in that particular geographic area.

4.1.4 Discussion

4.1.4.1 Prevention. The Coast Guard emphasizes that the best deterrent to needing assistance is a prepared and knowledgeable mariner. Before departing, the prepared operator ensures that all safety equipment, sufficient fuel, and necessary charts are onboard; the vessel is in good operating condition; the radio is operating properly; and someone knows the sailing plan of the operator, and will notify the Coast Guard if the vessel fails to return when expected.

- 4.1.4.2 Primary Concern.** The Coast Guard's primary concern in a search and rescue situation is to provide timely and effective assistance.
- 4.1.4.3 Responsibility for Action.** In search and rescue, the SMC is usually in the best position to assess the circumstances of a particular case, and to take whatever steps are necessary to promote the safety of life and property.
- 4.1.4.4 Safety Concerns When Disabled.** Inherent danger is associated with being disabled on the water. Although a specific situation may not be classified as DISTRESS emergency phase by the SMC, there may still be a real concern for safety either in the mind of the SMC or the mariner, i.e., the incident is in the ALERT emergency phase. *The SMC must be sensitive to the level of apprehension caused in the mind of the mariner when having a problem in a small recreational vessel, particularly when concern is specifically expressed.* The policy herein permits more expeditious response in those cases where the mariner expresses apprehension for the near-term safety of vessel's occupants.
- 4.1.5 Policy**
- 4.1.5.1 Distress.** *Immediate response shall be initiated, if feasible, to any known situation in which the mariner is in imminent danger.* This response may be provided by regular Coast Guard; Coast Guard Auxiliary; or other federal, private, state, local, or commercial entity resources. The SMC may use all sources of assistance in a distress situation without concern for conflict with private enterprise.
- 4.1.5.2 No Conflict Concern--Any Situation.** Private organizations (non-commercial), state and local organizations, and Good Samaritans are acceptable sources of SAR assistance. When volunteered or available, their help can be used without any concern for conflict with commercial providers. *However, if their expertise is unknown, the SMC shall more closely monitor the assistance provided.* This is especially true in the case of Good Samaritans.
- 4.1.5.3 Guiding Principles in Non-Distress Cases.** When specifically requested assistance, such as a commercial firm, marina, or friend, is not available, a request for assistance will be broadcasted. If a commercial provider is available and can be on scene within a reasonable time (usually one hour or less) or an offer to assist is made by a responder listed in the previous paragraph, no further action by the Coast Guard, beyond monitoring the incident, will be taken. Otherwise, a Coast Guard Auxiliary facility, if available, or a Coast Guard resource may be used.

NOTE: "Monitoring" of a non-distress incident need not necessarily constitute a radio communications schedule.

Three principles that guide assistance to vessels not in distress are:

- (a) The first responder on scene with the vessel requesting assistance normally will provide assistance,

- (b) If a Coast Guard resource or Auxiliary facility takes a disabled vessel in tow, the tow will normally terminate at the nearest safe haven, and
- (c) Once undertaken, there is no requirement to break the tow except as described below in Paragraph 4.1.6.6, "Relief of Tow".

NOTE: General procedures and instructions for towing are contained in the Boat Crew Seamanship Manual, COMDTINST M16114.4 (series) (Reference (g)).

4.1.5.4 Non-Distress Use of Coast Guard. The Coast Guard supports and encourages efforts of private enterprise and volunteerism to assist mariners. Coast Guard resources will not unnecessarily interfere with private enterprise. Coast Guard resources normally do not provide immediate assistance in non-distress cases **if alternative assistance is available**. A Coast Guard resource may assist in a non-distress situation when no higher priority missions exist and no other capable resource is reasonably available.

NOTE: "Reasonably available" means that the resources should be able to respond before the situation deteriorates.

4.1.5.5 Acceptable Auxiliary Employment. When on routine safety patrol under orders, Auxiliary operational facilities may be deployed to minimize response time to requests for assistance. *Every effort shall be made to provide maximum SAR coverage in the assigned area of responsibility by using all available resources effectively.* Auxiliary facilities may also be available for callout when not on routine patrol. Auxiliary facilities will be used to the extent of their capabilities and availability.

4.1.5.6 Inspection of Alternate Resources Not Required. There is no requirement for the operational commander to inspect, certify, or otherwise categorize the capabilities of commercial providers or any organization that responds to requests for assistance by mariners. Accepting or rejecting an offer of assistance is a function of the vessel operator. However, the operational commander should be familiar with the availability, capabilities, and operating practices of these alternate assistance providers, as they may form a significant element in the overall assistance network.

4.1.5.7 Conflict of Interest for Coast Guard and Auxiliary Personnel. Because of the possibility of conflict of interest, active duty Coast Guard personnel, Reservists under active duty or inactive duty orders, and Auxiliarists under orders are prohibited from engaging in commercial assistance activity of any sort. Likewise, Reserve and Auxiliary personnel are not to be used in any capacity that might give rise to the perception of a conflict of interest. *Vessels and aircraft used for commercial assistance activities shall not be accepted as an Auxiliary facility. A designated Auxiliary operational facility shall not be used as part of commercial assistance activities at any time.*

NOTE: An Auxiliary facility remains so designated even when not under orders as long as the person(s) is/are a member of the Auxiliary.

4.1.5.8 Assistance to Auxiliary Facilities. Coast Guard resources or Auxiliary facilities may be used to help Auxiliary facilities in need of assistance at any time.

4.1.5.9 Use of Government Frequencies. Government frequencies are reserved for authorized use by government agencies. *Commercial enterprise must use designated commercial frequencies. Commercial enterprise shall NOT interfere with the Coast Guard's gathering of information or communicating with a vessel requesting assistance.* They may, upon hearing of a request for assistance on a government channel, hail the vessel desiring assistance on an authorized calling frequency and switch them to a commercial channel to conduct business when Coast Guard communications are completed. They may also proceed to the location of the vessel requesting assistance, based on information overheard on the government channels. *As net control, the Coast Guard MAY permit nongovernmental entities to conduct short business transactions on a government channel on a not-to-interfere basis, but any unit so doing must continue to monitor the communications.*

NOTE: There is no requirement that the commercial channel be a frequency normally monitored by the Coast Guard.

4.1.6 Procedures

4.1.6.1 Obtain Information and Classify Case. *When the Coast Guard receives a call for assistance, the SMC shall evaluate the circumstances to determine the severity of the case using information obtained from the mariner.* It is the **initial** determination that will govern how a case is to be initially treated. Later developments may cause the SMC to reclassify the case and modify the response. If there is any question as to the degree of danger to persons or property, the case should be classified as being in the DISTRESS phase. *A SAR event is dynamic. Information must be obtained and evaluated as the case progresses. The SMC shall take action appropriate to the situation.* In determining the appropriate emergency phase, the SMC may consider a variety of factors, such as, but not limited to, the following:

- (a) Nature of the situation;
- (b) Position or lack of known location;
- (c) Type, size, reported condition of vessel, food, water, emergency signaling devices, and survival/life saving equipment onboard;
- (d) Visibility, including daylight or darkness conditions;

NOTE: A lack of visibility, in-and-of-itself, does not necessarily constitute a distress situation. *Other factors, such as equipment limitations, proximity to shipping lanes, etc., must be considered prior to case classification.*

- (e) Tide and current conditions, and the ability of the vessel to anchor;
- (f) Present and forecasted weather including wind and sea conditions, air and sea temperature;
- (g) Special considerations such as number of personnel onboard, age, health, and special medical problems;

NOTE: “Special medical problem” requires use of common sense, e.g. an otherwise healthy person, who simply has a limb in a cast, does not necessarily constitute a special medical problem.

- (h) Ability of the vessel to maintain reliable communications with a source of assistance. CB radio communications should be considered only under ideal conditions. They are not authorized on Coast Guard vessels for communication and Coast Guard shore units have no requirement to have CB capability;

NOTE: Another on scene vessel can act as the communications platform for a disabled boater. Although the Coast Guard discourages boaters from using cellular telephones for emergency purposes, they *may* be considered a reliable form of communication. If the cellular telephone connection is good, and there is no danger of losing the connection, then, in the absence of any other factors listed that would raise SMC’s level of apprehension, the case should be classified as non-distress and treated as such. In such cases, the Command Center should act as a communications intermediary and should closely monitor the case to ensure the disabled boater does, in fact, receive the assistance required. It is acceptable for the SMC to dispatch a resource while broadcasting a MARB, but it is the intent of the policy to allow commercial providers the opportunity to respond.

- (i) Degree of concern of the mariner for the safety of the occupants of the vessel - ask the questions, "Do you have safety concerns?" and if so, "What are they?"; and
- (j) The potential for the situation to deteriorate after evaluating the relevant factors,.

4.1.6.2 Distress. For cases determined to be in the DISTRESS emergency phase:

- (a) **Respond Immediately If Able.** Immediate response may be by either Coast Guard or Coast Guard Auxiliary resources. The SMC might be aware that other resources, such as private, local/state-operated vessels, or commercial providers, might be responding. That fact, however, normally should not delay or preclude a Coast Guard response. If Coast Guard resources cannot or are not responding, the caller should be notified.

NOTE: *As mentioned in 4.1.6.1, if a case is classified as distress, the Coast Guard shall respond immediately if able, to include broadcasting a UMIB and dispatching appropriate resources.*

- (b) **First On Scene Assists.** The first assisting resource on scene capable of stabilizing and handling the situation, whether Coast Guard or other resource, should render appropriate assistance and complete the case if it desires. If a Coast Guard resource arrives on scene and another responder has the situation under control, the SMC should determine whether or not the other responder is able to fully execute the case. If it appears that it can, the Coast Guard resource may be withdrawn.

NOTES: If a Coast Guard resource arrives on scene first in a distress situation and renders the situation non-distress, it may elect to complete the case, i.e., it may tow the disabled boat to the nearest safe haven if there is no higher need for the resource.

- (c) **Intervene If Required.** If a Coast Guard resource finds another responder on scene whose assistance is not adequate, the Coast Guard resource should immediately attempt to stabilize the emergency. Once the situation is stabilized, the Coast Guard resource may be withdrawn if the first responder appears capable and is willing to conclude the case. The Coast Guard resource should not normally be withdrawn if continued stability of the situation is dependent on Coast Guard equipment or expertise.

NOTE: The Coast Guard may direct a responding resource to drop tow or cease operations if it is determined that the resource or equipment is not adequate to perform the job at hand, e.g., a 23' boat cannot be expected to adequately tow a 70 ton fishing vessel.

- (d) **Treat As Non-Distress If Appropriate.** If the Coast Guard responds to a request for assistance and, once on scene, determines that there is no emergency, the case will be handled as a non-distress, following the procedures outlined below.

4.1.6.3 Non-Distress. For cases determined NOT to be in the DISTRESS emergency phase:

- (a) **Advise and Seek Desires.** The requester should be advised that:

- (1) It appears there is no imminent danger;
- (2) It is Coast Guard policy to defer to an alternate responder; and
- (3) The Coast Guard will assist in contacting any specifically requested alternate assistance, such as a commercial provider or friend.

NOTE: The issue of what constitutes a “specific request for alternate assistance” has led to confusion. Clearly, if a requester names a specific individual, company, or network, that is a specific request. In the case of generic requests for a specific network organization, contact general dispatch at the parent organization. However, if the mariner is unable to clearly articulate the name of the desired source of assistance, the SMC should ask for clarification. If unable to get clarification, a MARB should be issued.

- (b) **Offer a Marine Assistance Request Broadcast (MARB).** When specific alternate assistance is not requested or available, mariners will be informed that a broadcast can be made to determine if someone in the area can come to their assistance.

- (1) If the mariner requesting assistance states that a MARB is not desired or specifically requests that a Coast Guard resource or an Auxiliary facility be dispatched, outline the policy again. *Notify the mariner that unless a specific request is made for alternate assistance, the mariner must accept either the alternative of letting the Coast Guard make a MARB, or the mariner can arrange for assistance.*

- (2) If a MARB is declined, the SMC may monitor the condition, but need take no further action unless requested or the situation deteriorates.

NOTE: If MARBs are declined in a non-distress situation, the Coast Guard has no further obligation to monitor or respond unless boaters change their mind or the situation deteriorates. The burden lies solely with boaters.

- (3) When a MARB is requested, proceed as described below.
- (c) **Make a MARB.** A MARB will be made to solicit the voluntary response of anyone who can assist the mariner, and the MARB will include a general location of the vessel. (See sample MARB at the end of this section). *The MARB must be worded carefully in order not to create an obligation by the vessel operator to accept or pay for the services of any and all responders.* It is used to invite persons, such as commercial providers or Good Samaritans, interested in responding to do so **if they desire.** If no intent to respond to the MARB is heard within a reasonable period of time, Coast Guard resources or Auxiliary vessels may be directed to respond. A guideline of 10 minutes is recommended for the SMC to await an answer to a MARB before the SMC directs Coast Guard or Auxiliary resources to respond. Once the MARB is answered, the SMC will determine what a reasonable period of time is for a response time on scene, based on the SMC's experience with responders in the area and the circumstances of the case. Coast Guard resources or Auxiliary vessels may also be directed to respond if no alternate responder can do so within a reasonable period of elapsed time. Factors governing the elapse of a reasonable period of time for assistance to arrive on scene are discussed below, but such a period should not normally exceed one hour from first awareness of the case.
- (d) **Monitor Response.** As part of the MARB, any resource that is responding should be requested to notify the Coast Guard of the estimated time of arrival (ETA) on scene. This notifies the Coast Guard of the responder's actions. It also notifies the vessel requesting assistance of the ETA of the assisting resource. Moreover, it notifies other potential responders of the need for further assistance or whether they should proceed with any expectation that they will arrive on scene first. The SMC may repeat the identity and ETA of potential responders so that the mariner requesting assistance and others will know who has responded.

NOTE: Although it is encouraged that the MARB include Coast Guard notification of ETAs, it is not mandated. Neither is it mandated that the SMC repeat the identity and ETA of responders. It is, however, advised.

- (e) **Maintain Communications.** A communications schedule between the Coast Guard and the requestor should be established until direct communication is achieved between the requester and responder to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate and that assistance has arrived.
- (f) **Reasonable Time Determination.** Following the initial MARB, the SMC may wait a reasonable period of time before taking further action, during which additional MARBs may be made if desired by the SMC. *The "reasonable period of time" decision must be made by the SMC based upon the information collected at the outset of the*

communication with the mariner requesting assistance (see listing in Paragraph 4.B.6.a. above), as updated by subsequent communications checks. Loss of or lack of effective direct communications may increase the level of apprehension. The definition of the ALERT emergency phase is again referred to, with its key word "apprehension." It should be considered that the situation may be causing apprehension in the mind of the mariner, especially if the mariner so indicates. Any action to alleviate that stress may be instrumental in preventing the situation from deteriorating. The greater the level of apprehension, the shorter the "reasonable period of time."

- (g) **Simultaneous Arrival.** *To minimize conflict, if an Auxiliary facility under orders or a Coast Guard resource arrives on scene nearly simultaneously with a commercial provider, it shall report to the SMC, remain on scene until it is confirmed the provider is capable of providing the required assistance and safely completing the case, then clear the area, and take no further part in the incident.*
- (h) **Mariner May Decline Offered Assistance.** To a limited extent, the mariner requesting assistance has the option to refuse offered assistance. If the requester refuses offers of assistance from a Good Samaritan or an Auxiliarist, another MARB may be issued or the SMC may decide to intervene and dispatch a different Auxiliary facility or a Coast Guard resource. The mariner may also elect to contact a commercial provider on a commercial channel.
- (i) **Commercial Assistance Declined.** A more difficult situation may arise if the mariner requesting assistance rejects the first arriving commercial assistance. Coast Guard Auxiliary or Coast Guard units should not assist in these cases so long as the situation remains classified below the DISTRESS phase. Nevertheless, the mariner may be assisted in finding alternatives. Upon notification that the mariner does not desire the assistance offered by the commercial provider, the Coast Guard may, upon the mariner's request, broadcast one additional MARB. The Coast Guard may also provide the telephone numbers of other commercial providers in the area so that the mariner can call them through the Marine Operator. If this is successful, it is the responsibility of the mariner, not the Coast Guard, to negotiate who provides the service. *If unsuccessful, and so long as the original commercial provider is on scene, the SMC may maintain a listening watch for the vessel, but must make it clear that neither Coast Guard nor Auxiliary units will be dispatched.* Should the commercial provider abandon the case, the SMC may dispatch a Coast Guard or Auxiliary unit or issue an additional MARB, as appropriate. The principle that governs further action by the SMC is that once a responder has arrived on scene, the level of apprehension regarding the case is probably significantly reduced. Further dealings between the requester and the responder are not Coast Guard responsibility. Additional services provided to the mariner requesting assistance would be provided only on a not-to-interfere basis so long as the level of apprehension remains low.
- (j) **If Situation Deteriorates.** The SMC should normally dispatch Coast Guard resources at any time the circumstances in a case threaten to deteriorate into a DISTRESS situation that exceeds the capability of the assisting resource.

4.1.6.4 Cases Discovered By Auxiliary Facility. When an Auxiliary vessel on routine safety patrol or otherwise on orders discovers a vessel requesting assistance, but not in radio contact with the Coast Guard, the Auxiliarist will relay the request for assistance to the Coast Guard

operational commander and may undertake to provide assistance, if capable. If a tow is undertaken, the Auxiliary vessel is required to notify the operational commander of the identity of the vessel, the location of the vessel, and the destination to which the vessel is being towed. No Auxiliary vessel may undertake the tow of another vessel unless the Auxiliarist is reasonably assured of the safety of both vessels and the persons onboard. If the Auxiliary vessel cannot safely tow a disabled vessel that is standing into danger, it may endeavor to remove the persons from the threatened vessel and stand by until a more capable resource arrives on scene.

NOTE: Cases discovered by the Auxiliary are a particularly sensitive section of the policy. How the situation is dealt with is the end product of sustained negotiations and compromise effort on the part of all concerned parties. It intends that the Auxiliarist, not the SMC, will make the judgment as to whether the Auxiliarist can safely assist. When Auxiliarists notify the SMC that they intend to assist the vessel, they are not “asking for permission”. They have already determined they can safely provide assistance. The notification to the SMC is a courtesy. This policy does not reduce the operational commander's authority and responsibility to exercise command and control over all assigned forces, including Auxiliary vessels on ordered patrols. The operational commander may override the Auxiliarist's decision if warranted by an evaluation of the circumstances. However, unless there is a specific reason to do so, such as an indication of unusual risk or hazard, or an operational need to assign the Auxiliary vessel to a higher priority mission, the decision to assist should be left to the Auxiliarist.

4.1.6.5 Safe Haven Considerations. In cases involving towing by the Coast Guard or Coast Guard Auxiliary, the vessel being assisted will normally be taken to the **nearest** safe haven that has an available means of communication, normally a telephone. Coast Guard or Auxiliary resources should not tow the vessel beyond the nearest safe haven when there are commercial resources that could perform this function. Exceptions to this policy may be made in specific cases if, in the judgment of the SMC, they are warranted by humanitarian or other concerns. When determining the suitability of a potential safe haven, the SMC should be sensitive to the reluctance of some private firms and yacht clubs to accept a disabled or damaged vessel and the attendant potential liability.

4.1.6.6 Relief of Tow. In cases involving towing by the Coast Guard or Coast Guard Auxiliary where no emergency exists, the assisted vessel **may** be released to another provider who appears capable, provided that:

- (a) The SMC and coxswain of the assisting vessel determine that a hand-off can be carried out safely; and either
- (b) Alternative assistance is desired and arranged by the operator of the vessel being assisted; or
- (c) The operational commander has a higher need for the Coast Guard resource or Auxiliary facility.

4.1.6.7 Alternative to MARB. When no response to a MARB is evident, such as late at night or during an off-peak period, the SMC may dispatch Coast Guard resources or Auxiliary vessels. As an alternative, the SMC may pursue by telephone or other communication means any other SAR resource that can provide expeditious response, and ask if the resource desires to respond. Again, unless the responder is an Auxiliary facility that will be under orders, the offer should be made in terms of an invitation to provide assistance rather than in terms of "request you proceed and assist." An estimated time of arrival should be obtained and passed to the mariner requesting assistance. Continue to monitor the situation. Direct contact with the vessel requesting assistance as soon as possible should be encouraged.

4.1.6.8 Communications Interference. If someone interferes with government communications, issue the command "SEELONCE MAYDAY." If interference continues, then follow with "SEELONCE MAYDAY, this is (unit name), cease transmission or silence on this frequency, out." If there is still further transmissions then document the incident and process as an FCC violation. For further details regarding how to initiate a violation, refer to title, Radio Frequency Plan, COMDTINST M2400.1 (series) (Reference (q)).

4.1.7 SAR Coordinator and SMC Responsibilities

4.1.7.1 Responsibilities

- (a) *SAR Coordinators shall direct SMCs within their region to follow the policy and procedures established in this section of the Coast Guard Addendum to the National SAR Plan insofar as practicable.* SAR Coordinators are authorized to vary procedures where local conditions require it in order to achieve the overall intent discussed. Variances should be documented.
- (b) *SMCs must remain familiar with all SAR assistance resources within the SMC's unit's AOR, including those of the Auxiliary, and shall direct those resources that the SMC believes are needed to the scene of a vessel in distress.*
- (c) Operational commanders are urged to work with all who can provide assistance to mariners requesting assistance, including volunteers, state and local organizations, the Auxiliary, and commercial providers, to promote the most effective use of all resources available to the SAR system.
- (d) *Sector commands shall conduct regional public meetings with commercial assistance providers in their AOR no less than semi-annually, preferably prior to and at the conclusion of the local recreational boating season.*
 - (1) *At a minimum, one of the semi-annual meetings shall be held collectively for the Sector's entire AOR.* Alternatively, one meeting may be held at each of the Sector's stations for commercial assistance providers within each station's AOR in lieu of the second collective semi-annual meeting.
 - (2) Sector Commanders and Deputies should attend the meetings when possible. *At a minimum the Sector Chief of Response and the Command Center Chief shall attend each collective meeting.*

- (3) *At a minimum either the Sector Chief of Response or the Command Center Chief shall attend each station level meeting if held in lieu of one of the semi-annual Sector meetings.*
- (4) If meetings at the station AOR level are held in addition to the semi-annual meetings, a Sector representative should be invited to attend. Attendance is recommended but not mandatory.
- (5) *In addition to the commercial assistance providers, local agency responders from fire/rescue, law enforcement, CG Auxiliary and other members of the maritime response community shall be invited to participate in the meetings.*
- (6) Meetings should cover the full range of maritime response topics of interest to the attendees, including at a minimum the following topics:
 - a. Review of CG operational response policies and procedures, and any changes;
 - b. Review of each invited participant's (commercial, local, volunteer, etc.) response capabilities and operational areas;
 - c. Review and discussion of several relevant cases involving multiple segments of the response community; and,
 - d. Open forum discussion.
- (e) Sectors and Stations will also maintain regular liaison with all known commercial assistance providers in their AOR in order to discuss policies, build cooperation, and air any Coast Guard or industry concerns. Within each command a specific person should be designated as liaison officer and primary point of contact for commercial assistance providers.
- (f) It is highly recommended that commercial providers be invited to participate in training and exercises held with other (state, local, volunteer organization) SAR assistance providers.

4.1.7.2 Maritime Assistance Decision Flow Chart. The Maritime Assistance Decision Flow Chart, Figure 4-1, is provided to assist the SMC on MSAP decision-making. The flow chart is a tool to implement the policy, not the policy itself.

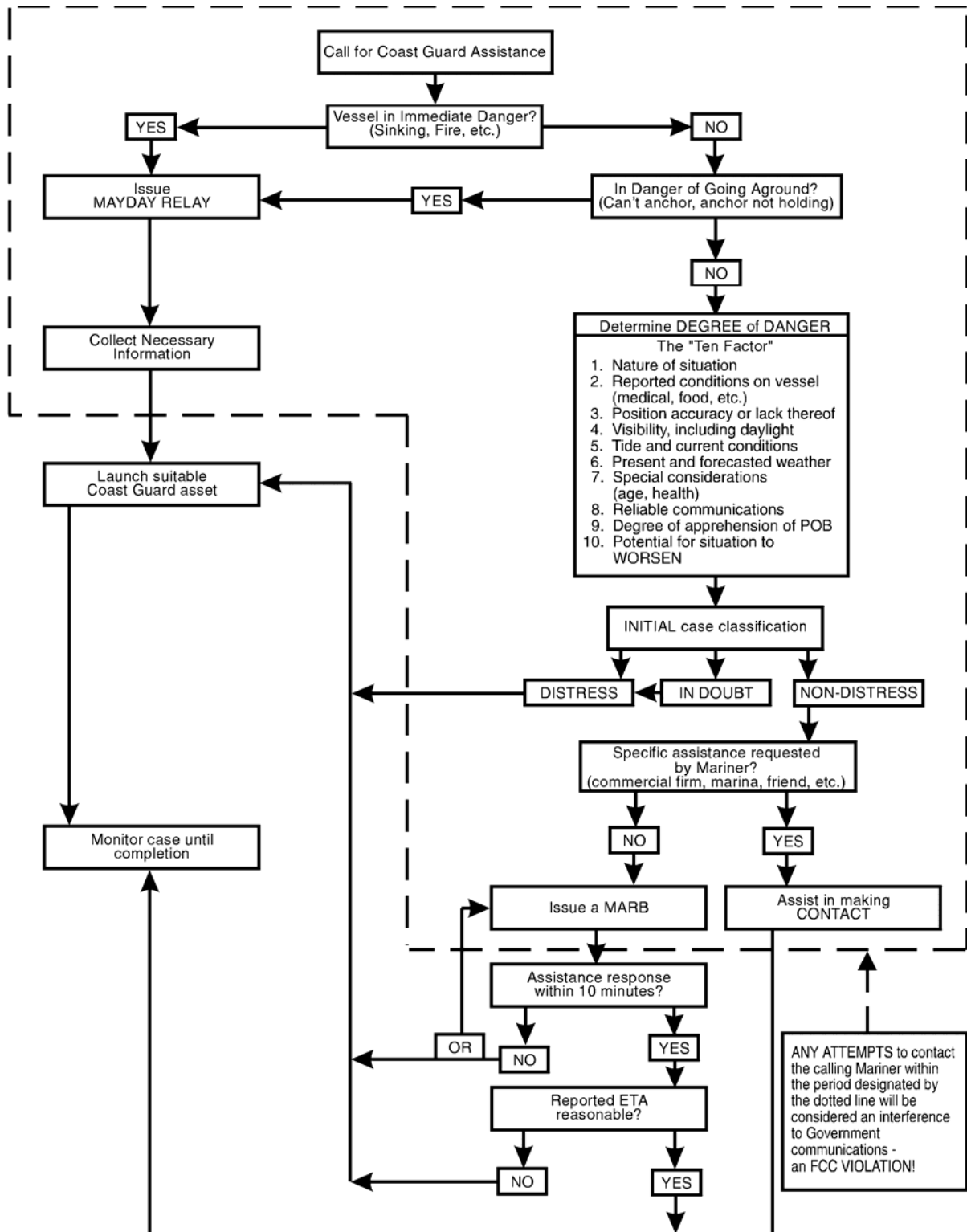


Figure 4-1 USCG SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) Maritime Assistance Decision making Flow Chart

4.1.8 Marine Assistance Request Broadcast Format for Radiotelephone Transmission

4.1.8.1 Format

- (a) Channel 16 (156.8MHz)
- (b) HELLO ALL STATIONS (3 times) THIS IS (unit identification) RELAYING A MARINE ASSISTANCE REQUEST BROADCAST FOR (type of vessel) (nature of problem) IN THE VICINITY OF (location). LISTEN CHANNEL 22A, OUT.
- (c) Channel 22A (157.1MHz)
- (d) HELLO ALL STATIONS (3 times) THIS IS (unit identification) RELAYING A MARINE ASSISTANCE REQUEST BROADCAST (text) OUT.

4.1.8.2 Example of Text

- (a) Channel 16 (156.8MHz)

HELLO ALL STATIONS. HELLO ALL STATIONS. HELLO ALL STATIONS. THIS IS COAST GUARD SECTOR HAMPTON ROADS RELAYING A MARINE ASSISTANCE REQUEST BROADCAST FOR A DISABLED PLEASURE CRAFT IN THE VICINITY OF THE FOURTH ISLAND OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY BRIDGE TUNNEL, LISTEN CHANNEL 22A, OUT.
- (b) Channel 22A (157.1MHz)

HELLO ALL STATIONS. HELLO ALL STATIONS. HELLO ALL STATIONS. THIS IS COAST GUARD SECTOR HAMPTON ROADS RELAYING A MARINE ASSISTANCE REQUEST BROADCAST FOR PLEASURE CRAFT MOONSHINE WYT5138. PLEASURE CRAFT MOONSHINE IS A SEVENTEEN-FOOT FIBERGLASS OUTBOARD DISABLED DUE TO LACK OF FUEL IN VICINITY OF THE FOURTH ISLAND OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY BRIDGE TUNNEL LATITUDE 37-03N LONGITUDE 76-04W. ANY VESSEL DESIRING TO ASSIST THE MOONSHINE IS INVITED TO PROCEED TO THAT LOCATION OR CONTACT HIM BY RADIO. PLEASURE CRAFT MOONSHINE IS STANDING BY CHANNEL (an appropriate intership frequency). IF YOU ARE OFFERING TO ASSIST THE MOONSHINE, PLEASE RESPOND AND PROVIDE AN ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL. OUT.
- (c) Channel 22A (optional acknowledgment of replies)

VESSEL SEA DOG RESPONDING, ETA 15 MINUTES--ROGER, OUT. VESSEL HELPER RESPONDING, ETA 35 MINUTES--ROGER, OUT.