

International obligations for implementing search and rescue services

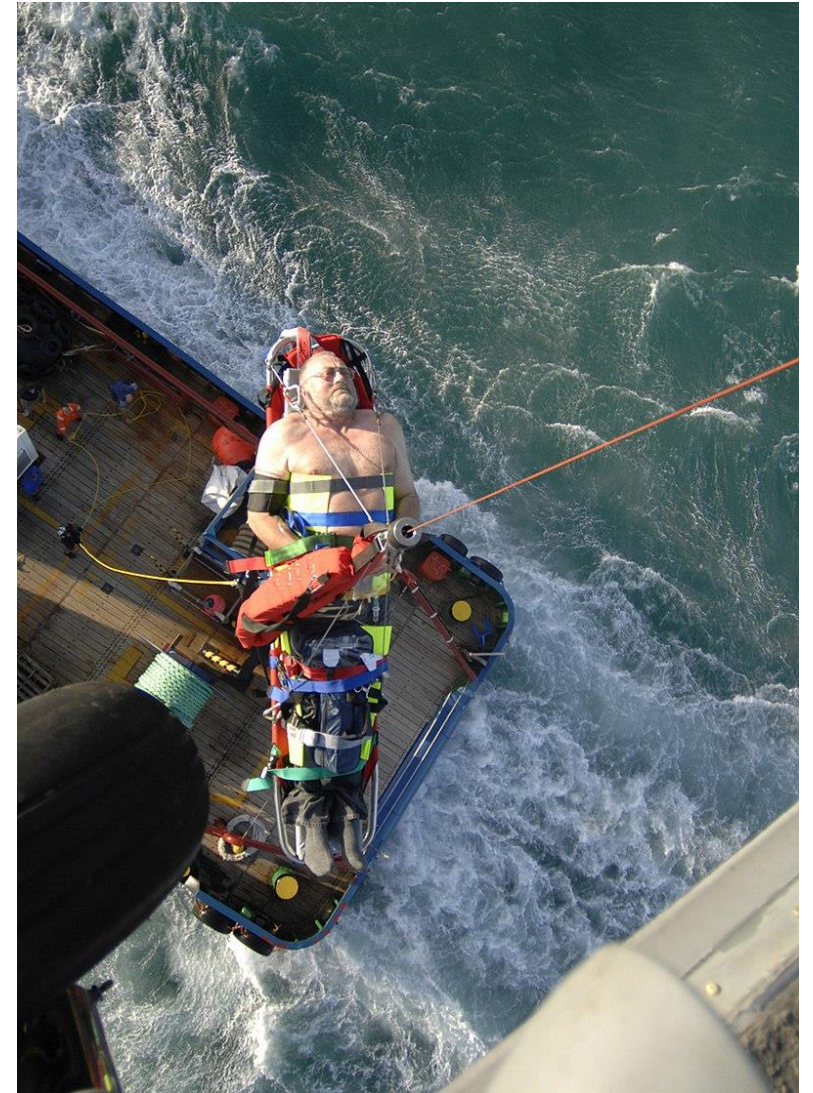
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1. The importance of maritime search and rescue services for safety at sea
2. International legal provisions
3. Challenges and opportunities

The importance of maritime search and rescue services and their role in safety at sea

- 71% of the Earth's surface covered by sea
- 90% of trade by sea
- A growing traffic outlook
- 40% of the world's population lives less than 100 km from a coastline
- Various uses: transport of goods, fishing, various operating activities, passengers and recreational activities.

- Being at sea also means being exposed to risks:
 - related to navigation: collisions, groundings, weather...
 - internal to the ship: fire, explosion, flooding, problems with cargo (shifting, dangerous goods), damage, loss of stability, etc.
 - risks relating to individuals: occupational accidents, manoverboard, etc.
- Third line of defence after prevention and on-board rescue resources



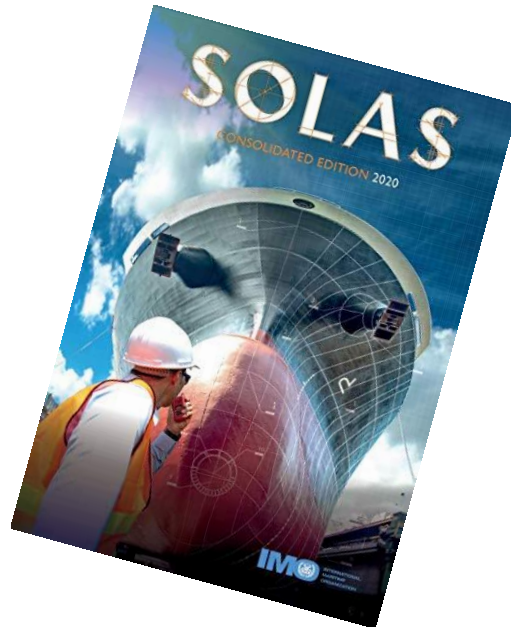
The importance of maritime search and rescue services and their role in safety at sea

- **Maritime** search and rescue services are deployed in a **coordinated way** to rapidly locate and assist people in distress at sea.
- These services are often provided by **specialist teams, rescue vessels** and **aircrafts** able to **respond quickly**.
- Maritime search and rescue services help to **reduce the number of deaths at sea, minimise material losses** and **ensure the safety of maritime activities**.



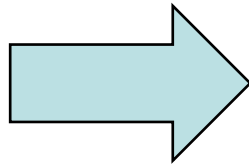
International legal provisions on maritime search and rescue

- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
- International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)
- International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR Convention)



United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 entry into force : 16 November 1994

Article 98
Duty to render assistance



1. Every State shall require the master of a ship flying its flag, in so far as he can do so without serious danger to the ship, the crew or the passengers:
 - (a) to render assistance to any person found at sea in danger of being lost;
 - (b) to proceed with all possible speed to the rescue of persons in distress, if informed of their need of assistance, in so far as such action may reasonably be expected of him;
 - (c) after a collision, to render assistance to the other ship, its crew and its passengers and, where possible, to inform the other ship of the name of his own ship, its port of registry and the nearest port at which it will call.
2. Every coastal State shall promote the establishment, operation and maintenance of an adequate and effective search and rescue service regarding safety on and over the sea and, where circumstances so require, by way of mutual regional arrangements cooperate with neighbouring States for this purpose.

▪ International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS 1974)

Chapter V - Safety of navigation - (extract from regulation 33)



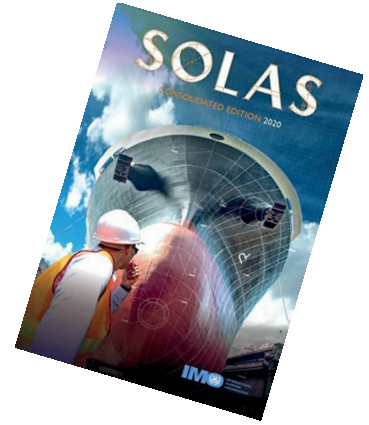
Regulation 33

Distress messages: obligations and procedures

1 The master of a ship at sea which is in a position to be able to provide assistance, on receiving a signal from any source that persons are in distress at sea, is bound to proceed with all speed to their assistance, if possible informing them or the search and rescue service that the ship is doing so. If the ship receiving the distress alert is unable or, in the special circumstances of the case, considers it unreasonable or unnecessary to proceed to their assistance, the master must enter in the log-book the reason for failing to proceed to the assistance of the persons in distress, taking into account the recommendation of the Organization to inform the appropriate search and rescue service accordingly.

▪ International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS 1974)

Chapter V - Safety of navigation - (extract from Regulation 7)



Regulation 7

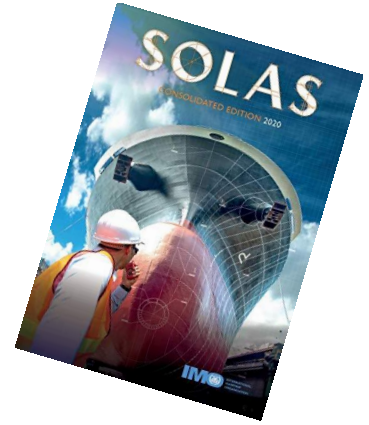
Search and rescue services

1 Each Contracting Government undertakes to ensure that necessary arrangements are made for distress communication and co-ordination in their area of responsibility and for the rescue of persons in distress at sea around its coasts. These arrangements shall include the establishment, operation and maintenance of such search and rescue facilities as are deemed practicable and necessary, having regard to the density of the seagoing traffic and the navigational dangers, and shall, so far as possible, provide adequate means of locating and rescuing such persons.*

2 Each Contracting Government undertakes to make available information to the Organization concerning its existing search and rescue facilities and the plans for changes therein, if any.

▪ International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS 1974)

Chapter IV - Radiocommunications - Part B - Undertakings by Contracting Governments* -



Regulation 5

Provision of radiocommunication services

1 Each Contracting Government undertakes to make available, as it deems practical and necessary either individually or in co-operation with other Contracting Governments, appropriate shore-based facilities for space and terrestrial radiocommunication services having due regard to the recommendations of the Organization.[†] These services are:

- .1 a radiocommunication service utilizing geostationary satellites in the Maritime Mobile-Satellite Service;
- .2 a radiocommunication service utilizing polar orbiting satellites in the mobile-satellite service;
- .3 the maritime mobile service in the bands between 156 MHz and 174 MHz;
- .4 the maritime mobile service in the bands between 4,000 kHz and 27,500 kHz; and
- .5 the maritime mobile service in the bands between 415 kHz and 535 kHz[‡] and between 1,605 kHz and 4,000 kHz.

Notas:

1 Each Contracting Government is not required to provide all radiocommunications services.

2 The requirements should be specified for shore-based facilities to cover the various sea areas.

International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR Convention) -

Adopted in Hamburg on 27 April 1979 - Entry into force on 22 June 1985

- **The objective** was to develop an **international SAR plan** so that, wherever an **accident occurs**, the **rescue of people in distress at sea is coordinated by a search and rescue organisation** and, if necessary, through cooperation between search and rescue organisations in neighbouring countries.
- Until it was adopted, there were no international legal arrangements for search and rescue operations.
- While in some regions there was a well-established organisation to provide rapid and effective assistance, in others there was none at all.



SAR Convention - Chapter I : Terms and definitions

"Search and Rescue Region (SRR). A region of defined dimensions within which search and rescue services are provided.

"Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC). A unit 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.

"Maritime Rescue Sub Centre (MRSC). A unit subordinate to a rescue co-ordination centre established to complement the latter according to particular provisions of the responsible authorities.

"Search and Rescue Unit (SRU). A unit composed of trained personnel and provided with equipment suitable for the expeditious conduct of search and rescue operations.



SAR Convention - Chapter 2: Organisation and coordination

- Obligation for Parties to establish, individually or in cooperation with other States, the following basic elements of a search and rescue service:
 - A legal framework
 - Assignment of a responsible authority
 - Organisation of available resources
 - Communication facilities
 - Coordination and operational functions
 - Process to improve the service (planning, national and international cooperative relations and training).
- Establishment of SRRs in each maritime area, with the agreement of the Parties concerned.
- Coordination between maritime and aeronautical services
- Provision of SAR services by Parties



SAR Convention - Chapter 3: Cooperation between States

- Parties must coordinate their own SAR facilities
- Where necessary, Parties should coordinate their search and rescue operations with neighbouring States.
- Unless otherwise mutually agreed by the States concerned, a Party should permit rescue units of other Parties, subject to applicable national laws, rules and regulations, to enter immediately into or overfly its territorial sea or territory for the sole purpose of conducting search and rescue activities.
- Each Party authorize its MRCC to make the necessary arrangements in co-operation with other MRCCs to identify the most appropriate place(s) for disembarking persons found in distress at sea (Amdts 2004)
- The Parties shall assist the master in disembarking persons rescued at sea to a place of safety as soon as reasonably practicable (Amdts 2004).



SAR Convention - Chapter 4: Operating procedures

- MRCCs and MRSCs have available up-to-date information about SAR facilities and available communications in their area, and detailed operational plans for the conduct of search and rescue operations.
- Capability of the Parties to receive distress alerts on a 24-hour basis
- Procedures to be followed during emergency phase
- On-scene coordination

This chapter states that "search and rescue operations shall continue, where practicable, until there is no longer any reasonable hope of recovering survivors".



SAR Convention - Chapter 5: Ship reporting systems

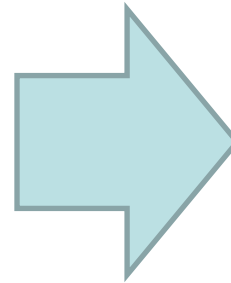
- Recommendations on the establishment of ship reporting systems for search and rescue purposes,

Current reporting systems could provide appropriate information for a given region for search and rescue operations.



Guidelines on SAR standards are provided in IAMSAR

The three-volume International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (IAMSAR Manual) was developed and is maintained to assist governments in meeting their search and rescue needs and in fulfilling the obligations they have accepted under the SOLAS Convention, the SAR Convention and the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

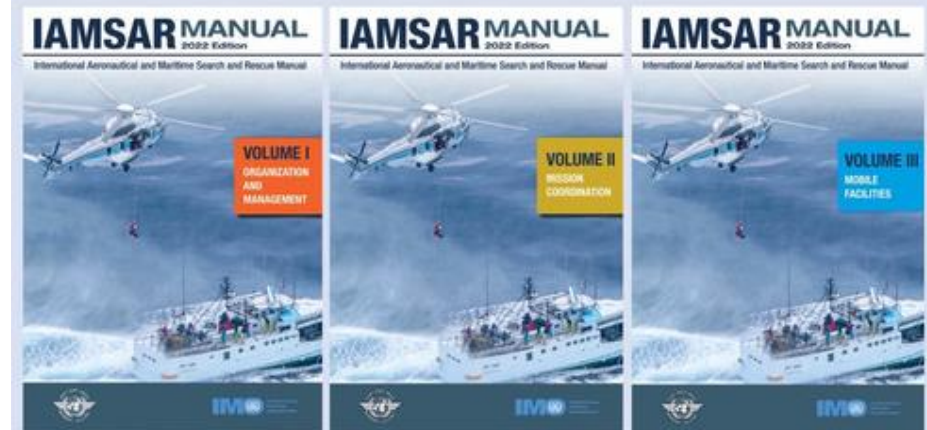


IAMSAR Manual, 2022 Edition

Volume I - Organization and Management (IK960E)

Volume II - Mission Coordination (IH961E)

Volume III - Mobile Facilities (IK962E)



The parties are invited to follow the IMO guidelines as far as possible.

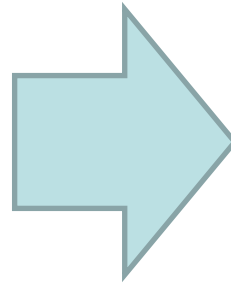
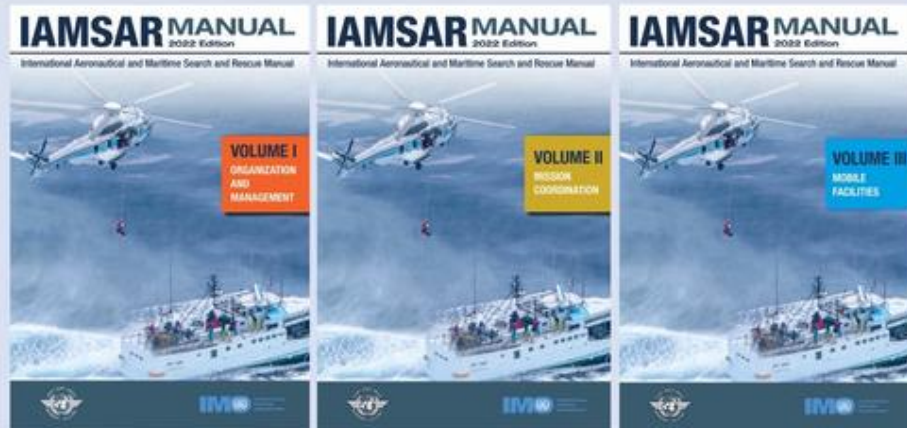
International legal provisions on maritime search and rescue (cont.)

IAMSAR Manual, 2022 Edition

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Volume II - Mission Coordination (IH961E)

Volume III - Mobile Facilities (IK962E)



Volume I - Organisation and Management deals with the concept of a global SAR system, the establishment of national and regional SAR systems and cooperation with neighbouring states to provide efficient and cost-effective SAR services.

Volume II - Mission Coordination assists personnel who plan and coordinate SAR operations and exercises.

Volume III - Mobile equipment is intended to be carried on board ships, aircraft and rescue units to assist in the execution of search and rescue operations and on-scene co-ordination.

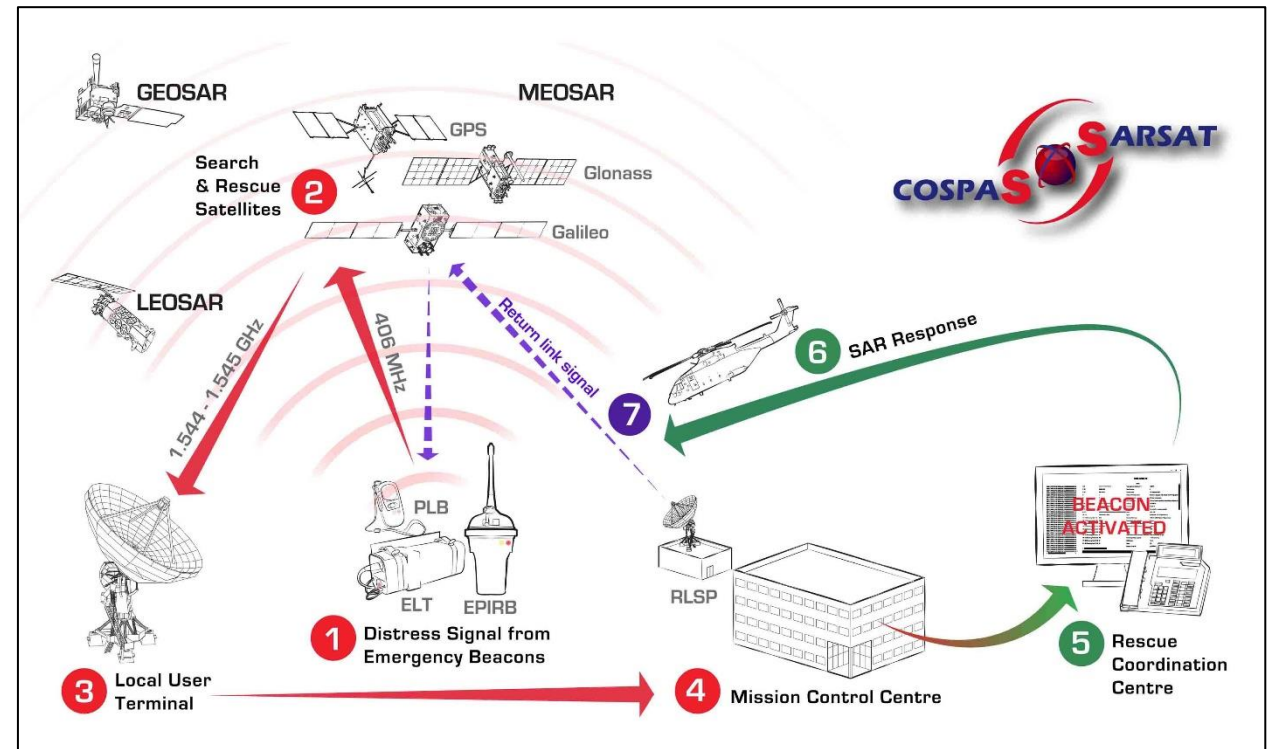
International legal provisions on maritime search and rescue (cont.) – Two other texts

Convention on the High Seas, 1958, Article 12 (extract)

" 2. Every coastal State shall promote the establishment and maintenance of an adequate and effective search and rescue service regarding safety on and over the sea and — where circumstances so require — by way of mutual regional arrangements cooperate with neighbouring States for this purpose.."

COSPAS-SARSAT Programme Management Policy, document C/S P.011

Provides for the designation in each State of a SAR Point of Contact (SPOC) - a Rescue Coordination Centre or other official national point of contact - accepting responsibility for receiving Cospas-Sarsat alerts to enable the rescue of persons in distress.



Challenges and opportunities

Difficulties to overcome :

1. Limited resources: financial, human and material.

2. Technological constraints: accession and adoption of new technologies due to technical constraints, high costs or a lack of expertise to use them effectively. Investments can be significant

3. Geographical obstacles: vast sea areas, extreme weather conditions, remote areas or areas that are difficult to access, making the implementation of maritime search and rescue services more complex. Need for heavy resources

4. International coordination: differences in legislation, languages, procedures and operational protocols.

5. Staff training and qualifications: the availability of trained and qualified staff can be limited in regions where specialised human resources are scarce. Ongoing training remains an ongoing challenge.

Challenges and opportunities (cont.)

1. Sharing knowledge and best practice: Working with other countries and organisations

2. Sharing resources: Cooperation and partnerships between States enable the sharing of the resources needed to set up effective maritime search and rescue services. Sharing of specialised equipment, nautical and air resources, rescue coordination centres and associated costs.

3. Capacity building: Collaboration with other States and organisations offers States the opportunity to strengthen their own maritime search and rescue capabilities. Joint training programmes, exchanges of experts, internships...

4. Regional cooperation: Regional agreements promote the smooth exchange of information and the ability to respond to incidents at sea. They also make it possible to tackle common challenges such as geographical obstacles...

5. International influence and representation: Collaboration with other States and organisations offers States the opportunity to strengthen their international influence and representation. Together, States can advance their common interests, promote high standards and practices in maritime search and rescue, and contribute to the creation of a stronger and more coherent international framework in this field.



Thank you for your attention

