



Virgin Islands Shipping Registry

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Marine Circular No. 01/2023

Search and Rescue Cooperation Plans on Passenger Ships

To: Ship Owners, Operators, Masters of British Virgin Islands Passenger ships and Passenger ships regularly using BVI waters

SUMMARY

This circular provides details of the Search and Rescue (SAR) Cooperation Plan requirements aboard British Virgin Island (BVI) passenger vessels and all passenger vessels using British Virgin Islands waters.

SOLAS requires the carriage of plans for co-operation between passenger ships and relevant Search and Rescue (SAR) services relevant to the vessel's area of operation. In the interests of safety and efficient emergency response, a plan for cooperation with the appropriate SAR services must be drawn up and carried by all British Virgin Islands passenger vessels and all passenger vessels using British Virgin Islands waters.

The IMO MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1 Guidelines for preparing plans for cooperation between Search and Rescue Services and Passenger Ships, provide a uniform basis for the establishment of plans for cooperation between passenger ships and SAR services in accordance with SOLAS Regulation V/7.3.

The Lead Agency for Maritime Search And Rescue services in the British Virgin Islands is the Marine Unit of the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Act, 2020, Section 6(1) applies the provisions of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS) in British Virgin Islands.
- 1.2 SOLAS V/7.3 requires the carriage of plans for co-operation between passenger ships and relevant Search and Rescue (SAR) services. In the interests of safety and efficient emergency response, the requirement applies to all British Virgin Islands registered passenger vessels, to which SOLAS Chapter I applies and are engaged on international voyages, and all other passenger vessels making frequent or regular visits to the British Virgin Islands waters.
- 1.2 The IMO MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1, **Guidelines for preparing plans for cooperation between Search and Rescue Services and Passenger Ships**, provides a uniform basis for the establishment of plans for cooperation between passenger ships and SAR services in accordance with SOLAS Regulation V/7.3.
- 1.3 Plans developed in accordance with MSC.1/Circ.1079/rev.1 as amended, would be deemed as meeting the requirements of SOLAS Regulation V/7.3.

2. Scope and Requirement

- 2.1 The adopted Merchant Shipping (Safety of Navigation) Regulations 2020 applies to all British Virgin Islands registered passenger ships and other passenger ships in British Virgin Islands Territorial waters (BVITW).
- 2.2 The owner of the ship to which the Regulations apply shall ensure that a set of SAR cooperation plans have been agreed with the relevant SAR services, and that the plans are kept up to date.

3. Search and Rescue (SAR) Cooperation Plans

- 3.1 All British Virgin Islands passenger ships and all passenger ships in British Virgin Islands Territorial Waters must have on board an agreed and up to date plan for cooperation with relevant SAR services for use in the event of an emergency.
- 3.2 The aim of the SAR cooperation plan is to ensure that ship and its crew, members of the company's emergency response team ashore, and relevant SAR authorities are able to work together efficiently during an emergency.
- 3.3 Information such as the basic details of the passenger ship, the owner/company who has assumed the responsibility for the operation of the ship and the SAR services (including direct contact details of all parties) should be exchanged and maintained ready for use.
- 3.4 Common frameworks for drawing up plans are available within the Annex of MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1 as amended. The framework of the plan should be modified according to the size of the vessel concerned and its area(s) of operation (Section 5 of MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1, as amended refers).
- 3.5 A simplified plan is available for the use of ships transiting many SAR regions, such as cruise ships (Appendix 2 of MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1. as amended refers).

4. SAR Planning and Periodic Exercises

- 4.1 The relevant regulations require that SAR plans for cooperation include measures for periodic exercises to be undertaken. The purpose of the periodic exercise is to test the plan's effectiveness.
- 4.2 Where possible, the periodic exercise should be incorporated into the Company's existing exercise schedule, such as those already being undertaken in accordance with the International Safety Management Code, so as to include the relevant SAR services and test cooperation arrangements without imposing an additional burden on ship's staff. The programme of exercises should also aim to ensure that, as far as possible, all staff are able to participate over time.
- 4.3 The frequency and type of exercise depend on the circumstances in which the ship operates. British Virgin Islands registered passenger ships are required to exercise its plan for cooperation annually. The Virgin Islands Shipping Registry recommends that over time, ships undertake exercises with each of the SAR services along her port rotation.
- 4.4 The fundamental principle of cooperation should be evaluated during exercises. "Live", "coordination" and "communication" type exercises are acceptable. "Table-top" exercises, SAR seminars and liaison exchanges involving crew, shore-based company emergency response team personnel, and SAR service personnel are considered to be beneficial.



Company: The owner of the ship or any other organisation or person such as the manager or the bareboat charterer who has assumed the responsibility for operation of the ship from the owner and who, on assuming such responsibility, has agreed to take over all duties and responsibilities.

British Virgin Islands passenger ships operating within British Virgin Islands Territorial Waters are also recommended to exercise annually with the relevant SAR services.

Further details on periodic exercises are contained in Section 9 of the MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1.

- 4.5 Passenger ships wishing to engage with the Marine Unit of the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force with regards to testing, development and exercising of SAR response plans while operating within the BVI SAR Region can do so by contacting the RVIPF by calling: +1 (284) 494-3822 or emailing: SAR@rvipolice.vg

5. SAR Data Providers

- 5.1 The United Kingdom Coastguard provides an International SAR Co-operation Plan Index of SAR Co-operation Plans they hold. This service is primarily for passenger ships on international voyages encompassing several SAR Regions. To submit additions to this index, please contact –

International SARCP Index,

National Maritime Operations Centre, (NMOC),
HM Coastguard,
Unit 12 Kites Croft Business Park,
Fareham, Hampshire,
PO14 4LW.

Email sarcp@hmcg.gov.uk

Telephone +44 (0) 2392 55600

- 5.2 The Marine Unit of the RVIPF has arranged to have access to copies of SARCO plans, in the International SAR Co-operation Plan Index for ships using the SAR data procedure. Copies of the Search and Rescue Cooperation Plans for passenger vessels NOT using the SAR data procedure should be deposited with the RVIPF-Marine Unit for inclusion in the publicly available index of SARCO Plans it holds.
- 5.3 Should the owners of a passenger ship operating mainly in the British Virgin Islands SAR Region wish that the Marine Unit of the RVIPF hold a copy of the ship's SAR Co-operation Plan, they should contact the RVIPF by calling: +1 (284) 494-3822 or emailing: SAR@rvipolice.vg. However, it is strongly recommended that the International SARCP Index is used to ensure the plan is available to all SAR Services via IMO Circular MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1.

6. Maintaining the Search and Rescue Cooperation Plan up to date

- 6.1 Owners/operators should ensure that each SAR Cooperation plan is kept up to date. The review, updating and auditing of SAR cooperation plan should be conducted as part of the ISM safety management system (SMS).

Director,

Virgin Islands Shipping Registry

