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Policy

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Policy Number:

PO1001

Policy Title:

Launching of a Lifeboat or other Rescue Craft - PO1001

Applicability:

Rescue craft launching authorities

Reason for Policy:

The rationale for a separate launch authority from those undertaking the rescue has been established to allow wherever possible an additional control to assess both the appropriateness of the tasking and the risk before a task is accepted from a coordinating agency.

Objective of Policy:

To establish the authority to launch an RNLI lifeboat or other rescue craft.

Policy:

The RNLI delegates the mandate to launch an RNLI lifeboat or other rescue craft to a designated launch authority.

Search and Rescue (SAR) Unit	RNLI Designated Launch Authority
Lifeboat station	Lifeboat operations manager (LOM) or deputy launch authority (DLA)
Lifeboat station (Humber)	Duty coxswain
Lifeboat station (Thames)	Station manager or duty helm
Beach lifeguard unit	Senior lifeguard

The launch authority will receive information from the Coastguard (or other coordinating authority) detailing the circumstances, the nature of distress and the request to launch. The launch authority will assess the request and, if in agreement, will pass this authority to launch to the SAR unit commander (coxswain, helm, hovercraft commander, or rescue watercraft operator). The launching authority may also use their discretion whether to authorise launch if such a report is received from a source other than the Coastguard or other coordinating authority.

A SAR unit commander will only be able to launch following receipt of authorisation from the launch authority. However, exceptionally, a SAR unit commander may be in the position where they deem it necessary, for the purposes of saving of life, to launch ahead of authorisation being passed by the launch authority. If this is the case every effort must be made to inform the launch authority of the action taken as soon as reasonably possible.

The final decision whether to launch always rests with the SAR unit commander who has ultimate responsibility for the safety of the crew and the craft whilst at sea. However the SAR commander is not permitted to launch if the launch authority has specified that launch authorisation is not given.

RNLI Classification: Protected

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Reference Documents:

None

Related Policies, Procedures & Guidance:

[PO1030 - Rescue Craft Capabilities and Limitations](#)

[GU1041 - ILB & Powered Rescue Craft Operational Limitations, ILB and ALB Survivor Carrying Capacities](#)

[Class specific fact sheets relating to each craft](#)

Related Forms & Instructions:

None