

RNLI STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Launching Authority response to a tasking request

Objective

To ensure that the correct procedures are followed by the duty Launching Authority (LA) in the response to a tasking request from a SAR Co-ordinating Authority. The LA plays an essential role in the safety of the lifeboat crew and authorising the launch of an RNLI vessel should always be carefully considered to ensure that the correct asset is being requested.

Validation

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Version	2.0	Review Frequency	Biennial
Author	Operations Manager (Lifeboats)	Next Review Date	October 2023
Validated by	Senior Operations Manager (Lifesaving Standards)	Pages	4
Department Sponsor	Head of Lifesaving Support	Director Sponsor	Director of Lifesaving Operations

Reference Documentation

PO1001: Launching of a Lifeboat or other Rescue Craft	GU1048: HMCG Lifeboat Tasking Format
Launch Authority Handbook	GU1006: Launch and Recovery
CoBT Unit 3.5-1	

Hazards

Weather and sea conditions

Safety, Health and Environment



Caution

Throughout this document, the term 'co-ordinating authority' (CA) refers to HM Coastguard, the Irish Coast Guard (Garda C6sta na 6ireann), Manx Coastguard, Alderney Coastguard, Guernsey Coastguard or Jersey Coastguard.

Tasking Request

- When the pager alert “Tasking Request” is received, the on-call LA should call the CA on the dedicated station telephone number.
- In the event of a tasking where unnecessary delay may cause a loss of life, the CA may bypass the ‘Tasking Request’ and proceed directly to a ‘Launch’ page. In this instance, the CA will be making best endeavours to contact the LA, who should, in any case, contact the CA immediately as the crew will already be making their way to the station.
- In the UK, you will normally be talking to your local Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC), but it may be any MRCC in the country or the Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre (JRCC). You will talk to the MRCC who initiated the tasking request and is handling your area/zone at the time of the incident. It shouldn’t matter which MRCC you are talking to, but it is useful to ask which MRCC you are talking to so that you can gauge likely levels of local knowledge.
- Listen to the request and obtain as much substantive information as you can to enable you to build a suitable SMEAC brief. Try to strike a balance between speed and quality of information. The request will be delivered in a standard agreed format with the information in the same order as the SMEAC brief.
- A useful way to rapidly obtain the required information is by using the following question format:

What	Nature of tasking / Mission as passed by CA
Where	Location of Tasking / Casualty as passed by CA
Who	Any other assets involved or tasked

- You may need to probe for extra information to help inform your decision.
- It may be appropriate to discuss the tasking with the SAR Unit Commander before authorising / declining the launch in certain circumstances. The LA must not feel pressurised into making snap decisions.
- Once you are satisfied with the information received, you should make the Launch Decision. This decision must be compliant, achievable and appropriate:
 - **Compliant** – within the rules and regulations?
 - **Achievable** – with the assets involved and for the current conditions?
 - **Appropriate** – do we need to launch? Is there a more appropriate option?
- Remember that the role of the LA is not simply to authorise the launch, but to decide whether it is appropriate to launch (risk vs benefit). It is more difficult to say no, or suggest a flank station be tasked, but it may be more appropriate and sensible to do so.
- Consideration must be given to what hazards the lifeboat crew will encounter and what risk that presents. It is the responsibility of the LA to pass on these hazards observations to the Helm, Coxswain and crew before authorising the launch.
- Once you have made your decision, ask the CA to send a follow-up page on your behalf.

- The full list of possible CA follow-up paging options is shown below
 - Crew assemble
 - Launch ILB
 - Launch ALB
 - Launch both boats
 - Cancel
 - Immediate readiness ILB
 - Immediate readiness ALB
 - Standby ILB
 - Standby ALB
- If an immediate launch is required, then send a 'Launch ILB / Launch ALB / Launch both boats' page.
- If an immediate launch is **NOT** required, it might be best to use the 'Crew assemble' page. This can help to 'de-steam' the launch and reduce red mist, giving the LA and crew time for a full assessment and briefing.
- Decide if the crew briefing needs to be delivered face-to-face or can occur on the telephone. Factors to consider include the urgency or complexity of the tasking.
- The LA should talk directly to the SAR Unit Commander to pass the tasking details, although, exceptionally, these may be obtained directly from the CA. This must not be passed through a third party as there is significant scope for the dilution of important information.
- If a face-to-face briefing is required, proceed directly to the station. If a telephone briefing can be conducted, allow a few minutes after the second page has been received before attempting to contact the station by telephone. Once the briefing has been completed, proceed to the station.
- In the event of a D class lifeboat launch in the hours of darkness, the LA should be at the launch site before authorising any launch. In this event, the crew can be alerted via the 'Crew Assemble' or immediate readiness page.

This SOP has been reviewed in conjunction with the latest risk assessment and any safety learning review recommendations.

Amendment History			
Date	*Version	Author / Contributor	Amendment Details
October 2021	2.0	Operations Manager (Lifeboats) (Name)	Terminology changed Additional paragraphs added (All changes highlighted)
August 2021	1.1	Operations Manager (Lifeboats) (Name)	Footer Added Review date amended (All changes highlighted)
October 2019	1.0	Operations Manager (Lifeboats)	SOP issued Validation period set to biennial Printed watermark added
August 2019	0.4	Operations Manager (Lifeboats)	Text changes following Stage 1 Proof HQ comments.
May 2019	0.3	Operations Manager (Lifeboats)	Minor Text Changes
May 2019	0.2	Senior Operations Manager (Lifeboats)	Minor Text Changes

May 2019	0.1	Operations Manager (Lifeboats)	New SOP
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***Version Control Note:** All documents in development are indicated by minor versions i.e. 0.1; 0.2 etc. The first version of each document to be approved for release is given a major version 1.0. Upon review, the first version of a revised document is given the designation 1.1, the second 1.2 etc. until the revised version is approved, whereupon it becomes version 2.0. The system continues in numerical order each time a document is reviewed and approved.