

Note: November 2022.

This Directive may no longer be current. Please check with the program office responsible for this Directive to determine if there are any updates or if the Directive is no longer in use.



COMDTINST 16711.2
23 AUGUST 2010

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 16711.2

Subj: COAST GUARD MASS RESCUE OPERATIONS (MRO) PROGRAM

- Ref:
- (a) National Response Framework (January, 2008)
 - (b) International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual, Volume II
 - (c) COMSAR/Circular 31, Guidance for Mass Rescue Operations (International Maritime Organization)
 - (d) Critical Incident Communications, COMDTINST 3100.8 (series)
 - (e) Marine Safety Manual, Volume II: Materiel Inspection, COMDTINST M16000.7 (series)
 - (f) Marine Safety Manual, Volume VI: Ports and Waterways Activities, COMDTINST 16000.11 (series)
 - (g) Mass Rescue Operations Scoping Study, March 2007
 - (h) Contingency Preparedness Planning Manual, Volume III – Exercises, COMDTINST M3010.13 (series)
 - (i) Passenger Vessel Search and Rescue Plans of Cooperation, COMDTINST 16101.3 (series)
 - (j) U.S. Coast Guard Addendum to the United States National Search and Rescue Supplement to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual, COMDTINST M16130.2 (series)
 - (k) National Search and Rescue Plan of the United States (2007)
 - (l) Risk-Based Decision-Making, COMDTINST 16010.3 (series)
 - (m) Coast Guard After Action Program (CGAAP), COMDTINST 3010.19 (series)
 - (n) Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series).
 - (o) Incident Command System, COMDTINST 3120.14 (series)
 - (p) U.S. Coast Guard Incident Management Handbook, COMDTPUB P3120.17 (series)

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction describes the objectives and scope of the Mass Rescue Operations (MRO) Program including the functional descriptions and responsibilities of preparedness, prevention, and response program elements.

DISTRIBUTION – SDL No.156

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
A																										
B	8	2	2		1									2												2
C				2						1		1	2		1											
D	2	1		1																						
E										1			1	1					1							
F																										
G																										
H																										

NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION:

2. ACTION. All Coast Guard Unit Commanders, Commanding Officers, Officers-in-Charge, Deputy/Assistant Commandants, and Chiefs of Headquarters Staff Elements shall comply with the provision of this Instruction. Internet release is authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. Coast Guard Passenger Vessel Safety, Prevention and Mass Rescue Operations Program, COMDTINST 16711.1 is cancelled.
4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. Environmental considerations were examined in the development of this directive and have been determined not to be applicable.
5. DISCUSSION.
 - a. In FY02 Congress authorized 22 permanent billets for the Coast Guard's Passenger Vessel Safety/Mass Rescue Program. These billets provided the Coast Guard with the capacity and capability to help coordinate and promote passenger vessel prevention plans, manage risk and maintain a state of readiness posed by the impressive growth in foreign and domestic passenger vessels. The main focus of this program was to address the need for additional resources to prepare MRO plans and conduct emergency response exercises. Coast Guard Modernization, Sectorization, and other internal restructuring have resulted in the re-programming of 11 billets. The remaining 11 program billets are assigned at each Coast Guard District and Sector San Juan (Enclosure (1)).
 - b. Traditionally the Coast Guard has excelled in maritime search and rescue (SAR) operations. The majority of these operations typically involve small numbers of individuals. However, with the increase in passenger vessel traffic both in the United States maritime SAR regions as well as worldwide, the possibility for the Coast Guard responding to large scale MROs involving large numbers of persons has never been greater. In addition to the rising passenger vessel traffic volume over the last several years and potential for maritime MROs, the Coast Guard's responsibilities under reference (a) have resulted in an increase in frequency and wider range of potential MRO scenarios in which the Coast Guard will respond. These large-scale MROs will require advance planning and preparedness to ensure an effective response by multiple Sector, District, and other SAR resources.
 - c. Per reference (b), an MRO is defined as a civil SAR activity characterized by the need for immediate assistance to a large number of persons in distress, such that the capabilities normally available to SAR authorities are inadequate. As described in reference (c) there are several additional important attributes of MROs:
 - (1) The incident is a low-probability, high-consequence event that might result in a large-scale loss of life or serious injury to a large number of people.
 - (2) Success often depends on immediate, well planned, and closely coordinated large-scale actions, and the use of resources from multiple organizations, on a national or even international basis.

(3) The incident may require a response to other Coast Guard missions in addition to SAR (e.g., environmental response, law enforcement, maritime security, or marine salvage).

(4) The incident generates intense interest and scrutiny by the media and general public.

- d. In the maritime environment in particular, the consequences of poor planning and preparation for MROs in terms of loss of life and other adverse results may be disastrous. Major incidents, such as a large passenger ship disaster, may involve hundreds or thousands of persons in distress in remote locations with challenging weather conditions.
- e. Because large scale incidents that lead to an MRO are infrequent, careful and comprehensive planning, preparation and training are essential to effective and time critical MRO coordination and response. To achieve this objective, the Coast Guard MRO program facilitates the response community's (Coast Guard, other Federal Agencies, Department of Defense (DoD), State and Local Agencies, as well as industry and other stake holders) development of coordinated MRO planning, prevention and response processes and procedures.
- f. MRO scenarios include responses to both notice and no-notice events which may be man-made or natural incidents. Examples may include, but not limited to: Passenger vessels (e.g., cruise ships, gaming vessels, and passenger ferries); rescue and interdiction of refugees/illegal immigrants; rail derailment; bridge collapse; aircraft disasters; on and offshore oil industry and non-transportation-related facilities; hurricanes; and large scale flooding.
- g. For an effective MRO response to any of the above scenarios (particularly for large passenger ship disasters), close cooperation between Coast Guard prevention, preparedness and response communities is essential. In any incident, members of the prevention community shall establish and maintain effective links with internal and external emergency management, firefighting, and salvage entities. The response community marshals and employs internal and external SAR resources. The preparedness community coordinates the scheduling and planning of exercises that contain an MRO nexus. In addition, the Coast Guard must continue to work in concert with industry stakeholders, other Federal, DoD, State, local and volunteer agencies to focus on preventing incidents as well as preparing MRO response policies and procedures. Information sharing and management will be employed to support the array of media and public affairs activities commonly associated with MRO response operations. Reference (d) shall be used to manage the information flow for an MRO response.

6. GOALS. The MRO program's goals are to:

- a. Adopt an all-hazard, capabilities-based approach to preparedness in order to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other maritime emergencies which may require a mass rescue operation.
- b. Establish a risk-based approach towards Coast Guard MRO planning, preparedness and response efforts.
- c. Promote the inclusion of MRO scenarios into Coast Guard and interagency exercise schedules.

- d. Incorporate new response methods, as well as planning and preparedness guidance obtained from actual MROs and exercise lessons learned.
- e. Ensure Coast Guard MRO policy and plans use the goals identified in Figure 1 below.

Prevention	Protection	Response	Recovery
<p>Actions to avoid an incident or to intervene to stop an incident from occurring. Prevention also involves actions taken to protect lives and property. This can be accomplished by working with industry stakeholders, Federal, State and local authorities and mutual aid groups.</p>	<p>Actions to reduce the vulnerability of critical infrastructure or key resources in order to deter, mitigate, or neutralize terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. Protection also includes planning; and awareness elevation.</p>	<p>Activities that address the short-term, direct effects of an incident. Response includes immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs. Response also includes the execution of emergency operations plans and of mitigation activities designed to limit the loss of life, personal injury, property damage, and other unfavorable outcomes.</p>	<p>The is the development, coordination, and execution of service and site restoration plans; the reconstitution of operations and services; individual, private-sector, nongovernmental, and public assistance programs; evaluation of the incident to identify lessons learned; post-incident reporting; and development of initiatives to mitigate the effects of future incidents.</p>

Figure 1: Elements approach to preparedness
 (Source: DHS National Preparedness Guidelines, dtd Sep 2007)

- 7. **PROCEDURE.** Headquarters Program Managers, Area, District and Sector Commanders will conduct activities, as appropriate, to meet the requirements delineated in Enclosure (2). Enclosure (3) provides the MRO program functional descriptions and responsibilities of Headquarters staffs, Areas, FORCECOM, Districts and Sectors.

8. FORMS/REPORTS. None.

C. B. Thomas /s/
Rear Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Director of Response Policy

Encl: (1) Passenger Vessel Safety/Mass Rescue Operations Billets
(2) Coast Guard MRO Program Objectives
(3) Coast Guard MRO Program Functional Descriptions

PVSS/MRO BILLETS

1. HEADQUARTERS.

- a. Program Manager, Mass Rescue Operations (MRO), Office of Search and Rescue (CG-534): GS-13.

2. DISTRICT PASSENGER VESSEL SAFETY SPECIALISTS.

- a. CGD1 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS-13.
- b. CGD5 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS-13.
- c. CGD7 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS-13.
(1) Sector San Juan Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS-13.
- d. CGD8 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS 13.
- e. CGD9 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS 13.
- f. CGD11 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS 13.
- g. CGD13 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 LCDR/O-4.
- h. CGD14 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS-13.
- i. CGD17 Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist: 1 GS-13.

COAST GUARD MRO PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Coast Guard MRO Program's objective is to enable Coast Guard, other government agencies, maritime industry and other stakeholders, to establish processes and procedures to prevent, prepare for, and if necessary, respond to MROs. The three major MRO program elements are identified below.

1. PREVENTION.

- a. Headquarters MRO Program Manager, associated Headquarters Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and District Passenger Vessel Safety Specialists (PVSSs) shall:
 - (1) Work with a variety of maritime organizations, including, but not limited to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), passenger vessel industry, aviation industry, other Federal, and State regulatory agencies to promote, establish and maintain effective standards for passenger and crew evacuation, lifesaving, fire prevention and fire fighting, vessel construction, inspection, crew training and qualifications, vessel security and vessel movement control.
 - (2) Ensure Coast Guard personnel are fully aware of and equipped to execute prevention programs in cooperation with industry stakeholders and the public. Specific guidance is provided in references (e) and (f).
 - (3) Ensure Coast Guard field personnel are fully aware of and equipped to execute prevention programs in cooperation with industry stakeholders and the public. Specific guidance is provided in references (e) and (f).
 - (4) Promote risk-based decision-making in the maritime industry regarding company and vessel management, operations, and maintenance.
- b. Area, District and Sector personnel shall conduct MRO prevention outreach, education, and awareness training with local community and other stakeholders.
- c. District PVSSs shall participate in relevant contingency planning and preparation organizational bodies (e.g., harbor safety, marine firefighting, and marine salvage committees) for their Area of Responsibility (AOR).

2. PROTECTION.

- a. Headquarters MRO Program Manager, Headquarters SMEs, Areas, FORCECOM, Districts and Sectors, in cooperation with the response community, shall:
 - (1) Use risk-based methodology to identify realistic MRO scenarios, including people, property and the environment put at risk by those scenarios.
 - (2) Develop MRO preparedness and contingency plans, strategies and tactics that can be applied by Coast Guard SAR resources to mitigate risks.

- b. District MRO Plan development will be dependent upon the identification and assessment of MRO scenarios within their respective AORs. At a minimum, Districts will develop and maintain AOR specific MRO contingency plans. Reference (g) identifies, discusses, and ranks 13 MRO scenarios for which the Coast Guard could have a major MRO response role. These MRO scenarios should be reviewed and, if applicable, used when developing preparedness and contingency plans.
- c. District PVSSs are strongly encouraged to coordinate with Areas, FORCECOM, Districts and other contingency planners in overseeing and coordinating the MRO exercise program. Exercise frequency and design will be as directed in reference (h) and Areas FORCECOM, and District contingency preparedness guidelines. Because risks and requirements change periodically, MROs exercises shall be structured around a five-year cycle. At a minimum, Districts should conduct and/or participate in one discussion based (e.g. seminar, workshop, game, or tabletop) and one operations based (e.g. drills, functional, full scale) MRO exercise over a five year period.
- d. In addition, District PVSSs shall:
 - (1) Assist in the development of the District MRO plans. Coordinate with Sectors to ensure compatibility with existing Coast Guard mission policy and plans (e.g., AMIO, Law Enforcement, Area Contingency Plans, etc.).
 - (2) As detailed in reference (i), assist in the development and collection of contingency plans and SAR Plans of Cooperation between SAR authorities and industry stakeholders. Such plans shall identify contacts, coordination procedures, responsibilities, and information sources that will be applicable for possible MRO scenarios identified within their respective AOR.
 - (3) Support and promote recurring exercise of MRO contingency and emergency response strategies incorporating District, Sector, other response authorities, and industry stakeholders. Exercise planning and implementation must adhere to Coast Guard exercise planning guidance.

3. RESPONSE AND RECOVERY.

- a. Districts and Sectors shall coordinate the MRO response with other industry response management, firefighting, law enforcement and salvage resources for all incidents (including but not limited to: local/state fire and police and emergency management agencies, other Federal agency emergency response personnel, industry responders including firefighting and salvage providers).
- b. Areas, FORCECOM, Districts and Sectors shall coordinate SAR resources including air and surface search platforms, and for identifying and requesting assistance from other available assets, including commercial vessels in the immediate vicinity of an incident.
- c. Reference (j) contains specific MRO response guidance and check lists.

COAST GUARD MRO PROGRAM FUNCTIONAL DESCRIPTIONS

1. OFFICE OF SEARCH AND RESCUE (CG-534).
 - a. Provides overall MRO program management and policy development and oversight.
 - b. Determines and coordinates funding support for District personnel engaged in MRO program outreach and training efforts; coordinates funding and budget requests as appropriate.
 - c. Coordinates MRO program funding and resource acquisition with other Coast Guard Headquarters staff elements, Areas, FORCECOM, Districts, and Coast Guard Research and Development (R&D) Center, as appropriate, to execute MRO program requirements.
 - d. Works in partnership with industry (e.g., Cruise Lines International Association, Passenger Vessel Association, etc.) to develop, coordinate and represent Coast Guard policies and positions related to pertinent passenger vessel MRO issues.
 - e. Manages Coast Guard MRO responsibilities under reference (k); coordinates MRO issues with other parties to reference (l) and resolves MRO matters within the scope of both reference (a) and (k).
 - f. Identifies MRO program shortfalls and problems; initiates action to address these issues.
 - g. Develops Coast Guard MRO policy for inclusion in future Coast Guard directives and publications covering responsibilities of the Coast Guard's SAR system for MRO contingency planning, exercises and response; monitors Coast Guard MRO policy implementation.
 - h. Coordinates Headquarters MRO/passenger vessel safety and partnership activities.
 - i. Coordinates MRO program requirements with other Headquarters staffs, Areas, FORCECOM, Districts, Sectors and industry stakeholders to develop a schedule for conducting required passenger vessel MRO safety discussions and exercises.
 - j. Provides input to other Headquarters staffs, Areas, FORCECOM, and Districts in the development of MRO contingency plans and related policies.
 - k. Provides information on MRO program status including activities conducted, MRO exercises held and planned, resource or legislative gaps, and mitigation measures to close any identified gaps.
 - l. Sponsors and supports the National Search and Rescue Committee (NSARC) and other SAR organizations in MRO planning, exercises, conferences and workshops.

- m. Develops criteria to assess MRO emergency preparedness and exercise performance. Evaluation criteria shall address issues such as human factors, emergency equipment availability and deployment, crew performance, management structure, and effectiveness of plans and procedures.
- n. Fosters international engagement on MRO issues including, but not limited to:
 - (1) Engaging with international stakeholders on MRO exercises and agreements;
 - (2) Participating in international MRO exercises;
 - (3) Ensuring updated MRO response guidance is incorporated into the appropriate governing documents, such as reference (b); and
 - (4) Assisting in developing U.S. positions and ensuring national compliance with relevant international treaty obligations and standards.
- o. Identifies strategic methods for improving overall national readiness for handling MROs, including changes in organizational, operational, and technological processes.
- p. Per reference (m), monitors Coast Guard Standard After Action Information and Lessons Learned System (CPS) input derived from MRO Response exercises.
- q. Per reference (n), ensures that records generated by MRO activities are maintained.

2. OFFICE OF VESSEL ACTIVITIES (CG-543).

- a. Provides prevention subject matter expertise to the MRO Program, specifically for all vessels inspected under Title 46 CFR Subchapters K, T and H and all foreign flagged passenger vessels this includes, but not limited to:
 - (1) Per references (g) and (l), using risk-based methodology to identify realistic passenger vessel MRO scenarios, as well as the people, property and environment put at risk by those scenarios. Developing strategies and tactics to mitigate those risks. Identifying roles and responsibilities in executing mitigating strategies and tactics.
 - (2) Aids in the development of MRO plans and implementation of procedures to prevent passenger vessel MROs.
 - (3) Leverages Coast Guard resources to engage industry partners and stakeholders to mitigate a casualty if it were to occur.
 - (4) Be prepared to provide input to new emerging programs to reduce loss of life, injuries and property damage resulting from passenger vessel incidents. Use lessons learned and case studies to evaluate current processes and regulations.
- b. For other types of vessels, aircraft or other transportation segments that are identified as potentially being the cause of an MRO scenario in the maritime environment:

- (1) Per references (g) and (l), using risk-based methodology to identify realistic MRO scenarios, and people, property, and environment put at risk by those scenarios. Developing strategies and tactics that can be applied to mitigate those risks. Identifying roles and responsibilities in executing those mitigation strategies and tactics.
 - (2) Conducts awareness and outreach programs to educate the impacted industry.
 - (3) Works with other Federal, State and Local Agencies to set-up cooperative compliance enforcement programs, as applicable.
- c. Supports Commandant (CG-533), (CG-534) and (CG-535) in developing emergency response and contingency planning and exercise guidance.
 - d. Provides input and technical expertise to Commandant (CG-534) and (CG-535) pertaining to passenger vessel equipment and emergency drills. Maintains current, and implements emerging programs with necessary improvements to reduce loss of life, injuries and property damage resulting from passenger vessel incidents.
 - e. As required, develops appropriate regulation and policy to address safety deficiencies identified as a result of MRO preparedness and response activities.
 - f. Fosters international engagement on prevention related issues.
 - g. Per reference (n), ensures that records generated by MRO activities are maintained.
3. OFFICE OF CONTINGENCY EXERCISES (CG-535).
 - a. Provides exercise policy and preparedness subject matter expertise to the MRO Program.
 - b. Works closely with Commandant (CG-534) and (CG-543), Areas, FORCECOM, and Districts in the development and inclusion in the Coast Guard's Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan appropriate response/evacuation exercises to enhance MRO response readiness.
4. OFFICE OF INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND PREPAREDNESS (CG-533).
 - a. Provides incident management and preparedness subject matter expertise to MRO Program.
 - b. Manages MRO contingency program.
 - c. Works closely with Commandant (CG-534) and (CG-535) in the development of MRO contingency preparedness policy.
 - d. Creates policy and doctrine from which District and Sector planners can amend their existing plans to include standardized MRO information.
 - e. Per references (o) and (p), coordinates with Commandant (GC-534) to develop Incident Command System (ICS) response doctrine unique to interagency MRO operations.

- f. Assists Headquarters staffs, Area, District, and Sector planning coordinators in the development of planning guidance, planning factors and mission standards in the preparation of required MRO contingency plans.
- g. Coordinates incident management policy, doctrine, TTP, and training for MRO response personnel.

5. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER.

- a. Provides research and development (R&D) subject matter expertise to the MRO Program.
- b. Supports Commandant (CG-534), Future OPCOM and the Districts with MRO related R&D initiatives on issues identified as a result of MRO prevention, preparedness and response activities.
- c. Fosters international MRO R&D related engagement.

6. AREAS.

- a. Coordinates with Headquarters and Districts to maintain an effective MRO passenger vessel prevention, preparedness and response program.
- b. Monitors District and Sector implementation of risk assessment and prevention guidance to ensure effective execution and avoidance of conflict, duplication, or overlap with existing programs.
- c. Participates in MRO and passenger vessel emergency response exercises.
- d. Facilitates the MRO exercises design, documentation and production by identifying and supporting exercise funding and resource requirements.

7. FORCECOM:

- a. Provides Exercise Support Teams for MRO Exercises as specified for the Coast Guard's Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan.
- b. Facilitates the design, documentation, and production of government MRO exercises.

8. DISTRICT COMMANDERS.

- a. Develops and maintains MRO contingency plans.
- b. Ensures periodic exercises of MRO contingency and emergency response strategies are conducted with the local response community and stakeholders.
- c. Per reference (h), conducts discussion-based (seminar, workshop, game, or tabletop) and operations-based (drill, functional, full scale) MRO exercises.

- d. Coordinates with Area participation in full scale MRO exercises.
- e. Promotes risk-based decision making within industry regarding company and vessel management, operations and maintenance.
- f. Conducts awareness and outreach programs to educate industry stakeholders.
- g. Leverages other Coast Guard assets such as the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Coast Guard Reserve resources to achieve MRO program objectives.
- h. Conducts additional MRO exercises as required to enhance preparedness and/or reduce risk.
- i. District Passenger Vessel Safety Specialist:
 - (1) Coordinates with Headquarters, Area, District and Sector staffs to maintain an effective MRO passenger vessel prevention, preparedness and response program.
 - (2) Coordinates Sector activities within their AOR to enhance MRO/passenger vessel safety (incident prevention).
 - (3) Works with industry stakeholders within the District AOR, Federal, and State regulatory agencies to promote, and maintain effective standards for passenger and crew evacuation, lifesaving, fire prevention and fire fighting, vessel and terminal security, vessel construction, inspection, crew training and qualifications, and vessel movement control. Ensures Coast Guard personnel are aware of and equipped to execute prevention programs in cooperation with industry and the public.
 - (4) Promotes risk-based decision making within the maritime industry regarding company and vessel management, operations, and maintenance.
 - (5) Per reference (i), ensures that SAR Plans of Cooperation for required vessels are developed.
 - (6) In cooperation with industry stakeholders and other government agencies, uses risk-based methodology to identify potential MRO scenarios, including people, property and the environment put at risk by those scenarios. Provides input to strategies and tactics that can be practicably applied in mitigating those risks.
 - (7) Participates in exercises as prescribed by the District Commander in support of the MRO program.
 - (8) Coordinates Coast Guard, other Federal Agencies, State and local response community support for the development of MRO prevention and response plans and policies.
 - (9) Provides input towards improving District MRO plans. Coordinates with subordinate units to ensure compatibility with existing planning documents and doctrine.

- (10) Per reference (o) and (p), promotes and supports training programs within the Coast Guard and with other regional stakeholders to ensure personnel are adequately trained to work cooperatively under the Incident Command System.
- (11) Coordinates with District and Sector contingency/exercise planning staffs to exercise MRO contingency and emergency response strategies with the local response community and all stakeholders.
- (12) Supports MRO awareness and outreach programs to educate industry stakeholders.
- (13) Works with State and local agencies to set-up voluntary or enforcement programs.