

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

SOLFIRE is a contingency plan developed to deal with any marine emergency or non-routine incident occurring within the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth, the Port of Southampton and the wider Solent Coastguard co-ordination area. This area will be known throughout this document as the SOLFIRE command area.

For the purposes of this plan "marine emergency or non routine incident" includes all forms of marine related security, counter terrorist and environmental emergencies, involving vessels underway or at anchor in the SOLFIRE command area.

This emergency plan has been produced jointly by the Harbour Authorities of Southampton and Portsmouth, in consultation and agreement with Maritime and Coastguard Agency (South of England) other emergency services and relevant local authorities. It has been updated to take into account The National Maritime Contingency Plan, Civil Contingencies Act 2004, changes to the Home Office crisis management model, and changed responsibilities for fire fighting at sea.

1.2 OBJECTIVE

This plan is intended to provide the command, control and communications structure to draw together and co-ordinate adequate resources to deal with any marine emergency occurring within the SOLFIRE Command Area.

(See Command Area Plan Fig 1 Page ix)

It is to be supplemented by other contingency and action plans held by the emergency services, local authorities, commercial facilities and marine related companies, which will be activated as necessary. (See Annex 5)

1.3 RESPONSIBILITY

Nothing in this plan shall relieve any person or organisation from any statutory obligation or responsibility.

1.4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The SOLFIRE Command area includes two of the UK's largest ports and busy shipping lanes to the south of the Isle of Wight. Together with a large sailing community and regular ferry crossings between the mainland and the Island this makes for a large number of vessel movements each day.

The Hampshire & Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Register identifies a number of maritime risks which could potentially result in the initiation of the SOLFIRE Plan. These categories are:

H15 - Maritime Pollution

HL8 & HL34 - Fire, Flood, Stranding or Collision involving a passenger vessel

H42 - Rapid Accidental Sinking of a Passenger Vessel

HL4 - Major Pollution of Controlled Waters

HL30 - Maritime Accident or deliberate blockade resulting in blockage of access

Additionally there is a range of credible threats to vessels alongside and underway within the SOLFIRE Command Area. Broadly, the vessels may either be the target of an attack or hijack, or could be being used as a weapon, or a platform from which to launch an attack.

1.5 GRADED RESPONSE

The response provided by SOLFIRE will be graded according to defined classifications of marine emergency or incident.

The initial response will be graded primarily by the level of resources required to deal with the incident and by its probable impact on land-based authorities. The incident may be upgraded/downgraded at any time by the Initiating Authority as advised by the emergency services as is deemed appropriate or as the circumstances dictate.

1.6 CLASSIFICATION OF MARINE EMERGENCY

Class A SOLFIRE An incident that can be dealt with by the Initiating Authority using resources readily available and with little or no impact on land based authorities.

Class B SOLFIRE An incident that can be dealt with by the resources readily available but where the Initiating Authority needs some assistance from one or more land based emergency services. **No significant impact is anticipated on other land-based authorities but they should consider themselves alerted.**

Class C SOLFIRE An incident where there is expected to be a significant impact on land-based authorities and where a multi agency tactical level of co-ordination is considered necessary and elements of the National Maritime Contingency Plan may be activated.

Class D SOLFIRE A major incident requiring the full resources of the SOLFIRE Plan and a co-ordinated response from both the initiating authorities and land-based agencies with an activation of the National Maritime Contingency Plan.

1.7 INITIATING AUTHORITIES

- HARBOUR MASTER SOUTHAMPTON
- QUEEN'S HARBOUR MASTER PORTSMOUTH
- MRCC SOLENT

In most circumstances the Initiating Authority will be defined by the geographical location of the emergency or incident (See Command Area Plan Fig 1 Pages ix).

NB Each Initiating Authority has a 24-hour operations room linked by direct communications.

1.8 ACTIVATION

In the event of a marine emergency or non-routine incident occurring the Initiating Authority, represented by their Duty Officer, will activate SOLFIRE by giving an initial classification and initiating the activation, notification and callout procedure described in Section 2.

1.9 PRIORITIES

When SOLFIRE is activated the priorities are:

- i) Saving of Life
- ii) Minimising risk to the environment
- iii) Safety of Navigation

1.10 DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

A major maritime incident or 'disaster' will attract the attention of the media. The response from local media is likely to be immediate and, depending on the scale and nature of the incident, it may also attract the attention of national and international media. The requirements of the media are immediate and sustained. The sheer numbers that may arrive at the scene within a very short time can exacerbate the problem of satisfying the media's requirements.

In these circumstances, arrangements outlined in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight LRF Media Plan will be activated for dissemination of information.

In order to minimise the risk of issuing conflicting or misleading information to the media, and bearing in mind the necessity for fast but accurate information and that Press Officers are likely to be co-located, all agencies should inform the agreed initial lead agency Press Officer (normally from the Initiating Authority) before giving verbal statements to the media and to restrict comments to matters concerning the agency that they represent.

It is important that individual organisations liaise closely before issuing press releases or arranging press conferences to ensure a consistent and factual line.

Contact details for the PR officers of individual organisations are listed in Annex 2.