

GUIDELINES FOR SAR EXERCISE PLANNING

Planning a SAR Training Exercise

The most important factor to be considered when planning a SAR exercise is realism. It is a fact that most of the SAR incidents that Canadian Coast Guard and Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary Pacific (CCGA-P) members respond to, involve rather mundane tasks such as locating and towing a disabled vessel. Comparatively few incidents are of a dramatic nature.

In planning an exercise it is advisable to limit the number of participating vessels to 4 or less and to divide station members among the various vessels to observe and act as crew. By mixing crews, members are able to see how different vessels are operated as well as getting to know their fellow station members better.

The search area should be well within the unit's normal area of operations. It should be small enough that it may be covered in no more than 1 hour, using the vessels at hand. This allows recovery of the distressed vessel and/or the treatment of persons who may be injured. It also allows time for vessels to gather for a complete exercise debriefing. There is no need for a well planned and executed exercise to take more than 2 hours from call out to the end of debriefing. The exercise policy of the CCGA-P allows reimbursement of dedicated rescue vessels for exercises up to but not exceeding 3 hours in duration.

Where possible an experienced coxswain should be placed on each vessel to act as an evaluator to be able to provide the best possible debriefing.

Choosing a Scenario

A basic exercise scenario should include a disabled vessel for damage control or towing, a person or dummy in the water for recovery, and hypothermic or injured persons requiring treatment and evacuation. For variety stations might wish to try a scenario where a vessel has sunk and the occupants have rowed ashore in a dinghy. This type of exercise requires great care and often ingenuity to get the people off the beach.

If time allows after the exercise has been completed, collect the participating vessels together at the debriefing area and have each vessel practice recovering a person from the water while alongside or close to a dock. A brave station member in a wetsuit is a real asset here. Encourage every coxswain to develop a suitable system for removing a man from the water. This is a good time to have 2 vessels explore the technique of towing alongside and docking.

Remember to leave enough time for a thorough debriefing. This is where much of

the learning takes place.

Night Exercises

One of the greatest challenges for any rescuer is being called out at night for a search. Even a familiar body of water takes on a new identity in the darkness.

Every unit should plan and execute at least three night searches every year. Look back over your station's incident records and see if one type of incident occurs regularly at night. Most stations experience a number of night searches for overdue vessels in a year. You might pick an incident which had been successfully resolved in the past and recreate it to see if anything is done differently this time.

The objective of any night search exercise will be to familiarize participants with working in an unusual environment; to emphasize the importance of timed search patterns, and to use equipment such as search lights to their maximum benefit.

Remember that at night, safety becomes a greater concern. It is extremely important to keep track of all participating vessels and personnel.

Administration

Remember that exercises involving several stations must be carefully planned, the objective clearly stated. The Training Manager must be informed, to ensure that maximum use is made of the event, and that exercises are beneficial and to keep costs to a reasonable level.

Upon completion of the exercise, the Station Leader of the organizing station is requested to submit a brief written report outlining the results of the exercise. The individual training reports for each vessel are to be completed online.

Pre Warning

The Station Leader is responsible for informing JRCC of the exercise, and also the local Ecomm Centre / Police. Concerned citizens ashore may sight the exercise dummy or other component of the exercise, and call it in as a real emergency.

On completion, the relevant authorities are to be informed where no duration was given in the original advice.

Coast Guard Vessels

If a CCGA-P station has a Canadian Coast Guard vessel, base or unit operating in the area, the Station Leader should approach the Master or Officer in Charge

to request participation in the exercise. Subject to operational requirements, the invitation will often be accepted. Coast Guard units should not be relied on for exercise planning, On Scene Commander duties, or any other function other than observer or participant search and rescue unit. The coxswain or officer commanding the CCG unit will be very helpful during the debriefing.

Remember they will be assisting for the benefit for the stations involved and the CCGA-P.

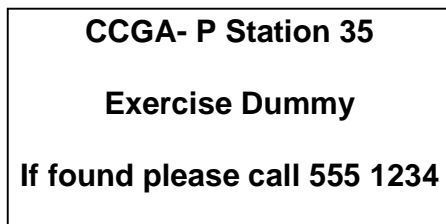
Planning Assistance

If planning an exercise is posing problems for the station, the Training Manager should be contacted for assistance.

Exercise Aids

1. Exercise Dummy

All dummies must be marked to clearly indicate that it is an exercise dummy in case it is lost



Dummies are available commercial or can be home made.

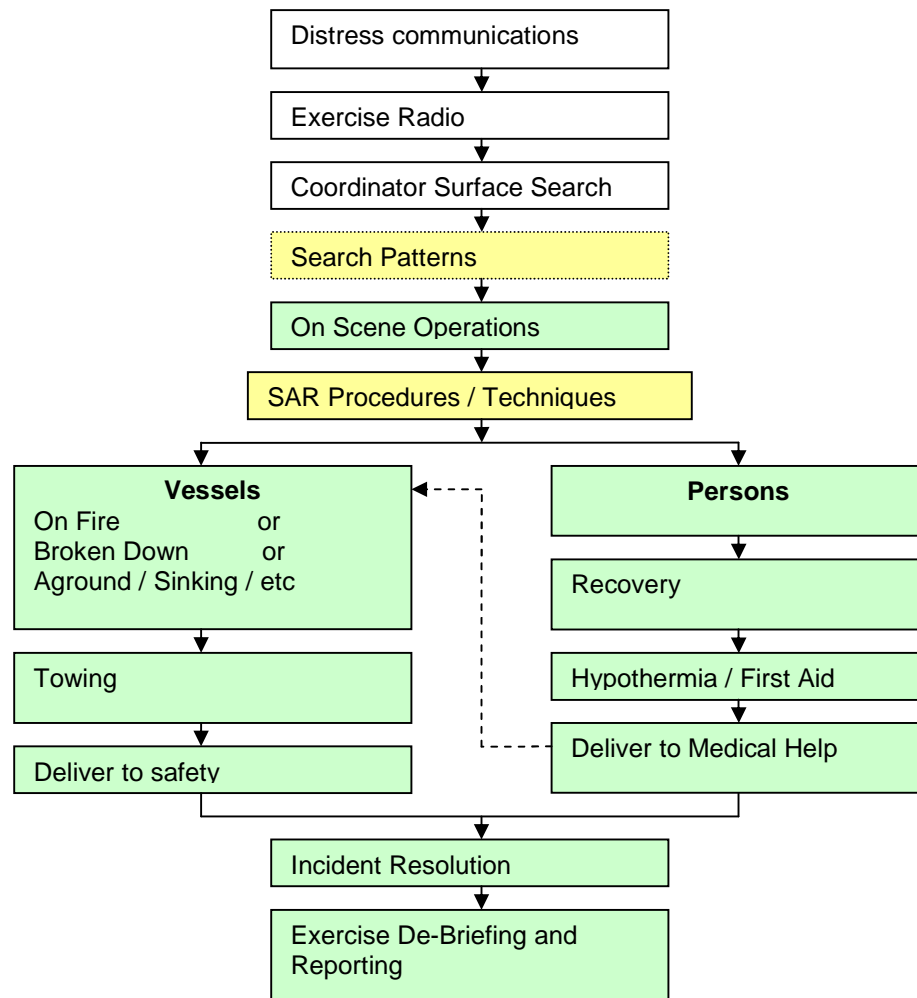
2. Exercise Radio

Appoint a volunteer to be exercise radio – this will add realism, to dealing with a scenario. Exercise radio to have both marine VHF and cellphone, - the cell phone to act as concerned citizen / shore emergency authorities.

All communications should be pre-fixed with “For exercise”.

3. Vessel in trouble

Exercise Planning



DO

OPTIONAL

- Keep it simple
- Use recognized procedures
- Place emphasis on
 1. recovery, treatment & handling of victims
 2. correct towing and vessel handling
 3. incident resolution
- Plan an exercise debriefing
 1. complete online report