

Chapter 9: Other Emergency Assistance and Services available from RCC Australia

9.1 General

- 9.1.1 RCC Australia performs operations other than search and rescue, which, if not carried out, could result in a SAR incident. These operations include:
- a) Assisting a vessel or aircraft that is in a serious situation and in danger of becoming a casualty, thereby endangering persons on board. This assistance may be by way of direct action, or by way of notification to, and coordination with, other SAR authorities;
 - b) Broadcasting Maritime Safety Information (MSI);
 - c) Alerting appropriate authorities of unlawful acts being committed against an aircraft or ship;
 - d) Alerting appropriate authorities after a ship or aircraft has been abandoned, to minimise future hazards; and
 - e) Providing an active SAR Watch to vessels through the Australian Ship Reporting System (AUSREP).

9.2 Safety Information

- 9.2.1 Maritime Safety Information (MSI), such as warnings of hazards to navigation, is promulgated by RCC Australia and broadcast through the Inmarsat SafetyNET and some Limited Coast Radio Stations (LCRS). Broadcast of MSI serves to assist with preventing SAR incidents from occurring. This service is provided by RCC Australia throughout Australia's region and NAVAREA 'X' (Ten).

9.3 Unlawful Acts

- 9.3.1 RCC Australia may become aware of an aircraft known or believed to be subject to unlawful interference. RCC Australia will advise Airservices Australia as soon as possible. Appropriate procedures will be implemented should the situation develop to a point that SAR action is, or will be, necessary.
- 9.3.2 Special signals have been developed for use by ships under attack or threat of attack from pirates or armed robbers. "Piracy/Armed Robbery Attack" is a category of distress message for all classes of digital selective call equipment and Inmarsat has added a piracy message to the Inmarsat C menu for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). For their own safety, ships may have to covertly send out the "Piracy/Armed Robbery Attack" message.
- 9.3.3 When RCC Australia becomes aware of such a situation, it should declare a Phase, advise appropriate response agencies in accordance with RCC Australia Procedures, and begin preparations for possible SAR operations as appropriate. If the ship covertly sends a message care must be taken in any communications sent back to the ship so as not to warn the pirates.

- 9.3.4 RCC Australia, on receiving a report of piracy/armed robbery attack, would act in accordance with the following:
- a) If the attack is within the Australian SRR, RCC Australia would:
 - i) Acknowledge the report unless it is suspected that it is a covert report;
 - ii) Notify appropriate security authorities as detailed in RCC Australia Procedures;
 - iii) Notify the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre;
 - iv) Provide assistance to those Authorities by way of information and provision of communications; and
 - v) Consider the need to notify other shipping in the area.
 - b) If the attack is outside the Australian SRR, RCC Australia would:
 - i) Acknowledge the report unless it is suspected that it is a covert report;
 - ii) Notify the appropriate RCC;
 - iii) Notify the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre;
 - iv) If the attack is near the boundary of the Australian SRR, notify the Australian security authorities as in (a) above; and
 - v) Consider the need to notify other shipping in the area.

9.4 Medical Assistance to Vessels at Sea

- 9.4.1 The RCC Australia is a Division of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), a Commonwealth statutory authority established under the Australian Maritime Safety Act 1990. The International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue 1979 requires parties to the Convention to provide (among other things) on request, medical advice, initial medical assistance and MEDEVACS. Australia, through RCC Australia provides these services in the Australian search and rescue region (SRR).

9.5 Emergencies

- 9.5.1 RCC Australia is AMSA's operational point of contact and provides a communications and coordination support function for marine pollution response. The *Australian Maritime Safety Act 1990* sets out the functions of AMSA, including "the combating of pollution in the marine environment". The *Protection of the Sea (Powers of Intervention) Act 1981* implements the International Convention relating to intervention on the high seas in cases of oil pollution casualties and the protocol to that convention. AMSA is the managing agency for the *National Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plan*, and the *National Marine Chemical Spill Contingency Plan*.
- 9.5.2 RCC Australia has a number of other roles during emergencies including as outlined by the Australian Government:
- a) Disaster Plans; and
 - b) National Security, crisis and Emergency Management arrangements.
- 9.5.3 RCC Australia can coordinate AMSA's search and rescue assets in support of wider emergencies as appropriate, including major bushfires or other disasters.