

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE HARBOURS AND AIRPORT COMMITTEE
BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 9th NOVEMBER 2004

Question

- (a) Following the closure of the Corbière radio station and proposal to reduce Port Control cover so that between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. only one operator will be on station, will the President inform members how these changes meet MCA guidelines, which require a minimum of three persons manning a coastguard station at all times?
- (b) Would the President confirm that the sole operator will
- (i) have virtually no visual contact with operations;
 - (ii) at times have to handle VHF and telephone calls simultaneously;
 - (iii) not be available when getting a snack or going to the toilet; and,
 - (iv) be unable to call out the lifeboat in an emergency, but have to telephone the Duty Officer to do so?
- (c) How do the changes equate to the 'significant increased levels of safety' and follow 'UK guidelines as best practise', as the President recently described in answers to my previous question?

Answer

- (a) The closure of Corbière was in the sense of location only. The operation of the station has moved location into the Marine Rescue Sub-Centre (MRSC) at Maritime House. This centre is run under the requirements of the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue 1979, as amended, from which MCA guidelines are based.

The precise objectives of any coastguard or Vessel Traffic Service station flows from the Formal Risk Assessment that was described in my answer to the recent previous question. The guidelines indicate that such assessment depends on the particular circumstances in the sea area concerned and the volume and character of maritime traffic. They also indicate the need to take into account the capability of expertise and technology available.

U.K. Coastguard guidelines define the minimum staffing level being defined as the level that is 'capable of supporting the normal level of incident activity within the margin of safety'. Supporting our analysis that single manning is adequate during night-time hours, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Search and Rescue (SAR) Manual states that stations such as Jersey, as a Rescue sub-centre 'typically have fewer responsibilities and capabilities than their associated Rescue Co-ordination Centres, and that their requirements in personnel, equipment and accommodations are usually smaller;. The local Health and Safety Inspectorate has also assessed our proposals as being satisfactory in regard to these concerns (for shift patterns, lone working etc).

In fact, there is no change from the single manning that always existed at Corbière. However, in bringing operators closer to the hub of operations at St. Helier, we have removed some of the risks that had been previously assessed.

- (b) *Between 2200 hrs and 0600 hrs.*
- (i) I cannot confirm this since, it is not correct. The view extends at least from Les Minquiers to Noirmont,

with both stations having an adequate view of the harbour and its approaches.

In addition, we have augmented the ability to monitor operational security and safety visually by increasing our internal suite of CCTV cameras to a total of 22 around the harbour, offering these operators as detailed a view as required into most areas.

It must be pointed out, however, that the coastguard function is not required to maintain a visual watch. It is potentially compromising the safe operation of the radio and other communications systems should a visual watch be required.

- (ii) Yes, and this has always been the situation. However, whilst simultaneous VHF and telephone calls are possible, they are statistically unlikely in these hours. An upgrade in the communications systems has also been made to ensure that this is as simple as possible, with priority being to calls given as necessary.
- (iii) The kitchen and toilet are now adjacent to the Operations room in the MRSC, a distinct improvement from the previous arrangement which involved a flight of stairs. Both have been fitted with extension loudspeakers to ensure appropriate availability at all times.
- (iv) The MRSC has full control of the RNLi pager system. The Duty Harbour Master is both the RNLi Deputy Launching Authority and the SAR Mission Co-Ordinator. Under Royal National Lifeboat Institution procedures, the only persons able to launch the Lifeboat are the 'Lifeboat Operations Manager' or the 'Deputy Launching Authorities'.

I can confirm therefore that it is essential that the Duty Harbour Master is contacted in order to launch the Lifeboat. This remains an unchanged procedure.

- (c) I am pleased to inform the States the following significant improvements to safety as examples, which all follow U.K. guidelines. These guidelines are not prescriptive, but rather offer best practice through a risk based approach.
 - 1. The Coastguard Radio Operator and the Duty Harbour Master now work in the same room, enabling close working during SAR missions and normal harbour operations. This removes the need for telephone communications between Officer and Mission Co-ordinator, and achieves a time saving in the order of 80% on each message. The overall increase in safety, with the team working together cannot be underestimated, with reduced chances of mixed messages, contributory team decision making, common systems and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), enhancing the previous arrangements.
 - 2. Each Officer will be trained to International or National levels of competency for these functional areas. This not only sets a standard of competency for recruitment and meets the U.K. guidelines, but also allows the department and officers to be confident in meeting the standards expected. This is a significant increase in safety from a previously unregulated role.
 - 3. Increased training and competencies also increases safety awareness in all respects, and the presence of the Marine Officers in the MRSC contribute to safety in all Port operations, where they were before limited to one area of operation.
 - 4. Lone working issues have been minimised even further through the location of officers in a central location, with other 24 hour harbour services (e.g. security) being able to monitor the safety of marine officers with significantly greater effect.
 - 5. Working arrangements are now meeting local Health and Safety Inspectorate assessed levels, especially in regard to shift working.
 - 6. With the reduction in demand on the two original services of Jersey Radio and Port Control over the last 5 years, sustained periods of inactivity were being experienced during the night-time hours. Combining

the two functions will allow a greater focus on a combined role within assessed levels of work, increasing safe operations in all respects.

7. Local shipping and mariners will all be operating within the infrastructure of these increased safety standards, and professionalism. All vessels, as well as the local community, rely on the service for the coastguard function to enable an appropriate response to maritime incidents and emergencies, and the Vessel Navigational Information Service to ensure that essential information becomes available in time for on-board navigational decision making. This fosters a greater likelihood of preventing incidents and increased levels of professional response to incidents when they do occur.

The services contribute to safety of life at sea, safety and efficiency of navigation and protection of the marine environment, adjacent shore areas and worksites from possible adverse effects of maritime traffic. This enables us to meet our duty more effectively to ensure the safe and efficient use of the harbour by those who have the right to use its facilities and navigate our waters. Exercise of this function depends on communication with users and is typically located where port communications from vessels are handled. Thus, the increase in effective communications which we have achieved increases the quality of service offered in all respects.

In summary, I am pleased to offer these significant improvements in safety, which happily contribute towards the States' objectives of increased efficiencies at the same time.