



Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

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Potomac River Rescue, Assistance, and Emergency Incident Response Plan

**Approved by the COG Fire Chiefs Committee
Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments**

May 2020

COG POTOMAC RIVER RESCUE, ASSISTANCE, AND EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

PURPOSE

An emergency occurring on the Potomac River presents a host of unique rescue, assistance, and coordination challenges. The water environment presents a threat to those in and around the river to include; life safety hazards, the terrain adjacent to the river limits accessibility, and hazardous material exposure and environmental conditions intensify in the maritime environment. These challenges are exacerbated by limited resources in a multi-jurisdictional environment, resulting in a need for seamless interoperability in every response.

Because of these unique circumstances, public safety agencies with jurisdiction on the Potomac River, its tributaries, or adjacent lands, signatory of the *Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) Mutual Aide Operations Plan (MAOP)* agree to respond in a coordinated manner as outlined in this response plan.

SAFETY FIRST

The Potomac River is a hazardous force that deserves one's constant respect. Each year, three to six drownings and several boating emergencies take place. When incidents happen, local, state, and federal agencies must act swiftly and efficiently to mitigate life-threatening circumstances and protect property.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): All responders shall be equipped with personal flotation and appropriate protective equipment to limit exposure to cold, heat, and weather-related injuries. Agencies are encouraged to develop a standard for hypothermia protective gear. When the human body is submerged in water, heat is lost approximately 26 times faster than it is on dry land, making hypothermia one of the greatest dangers to a person who enters the water.

DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS

Outfitting regional organizations with the right equipment and dispatching resources based on capabilities is paramount to ensuring a resilient region and effective responses. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), United States Coast Guard (USCG), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Operational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and other accreditation providing organizations define standards with which all response agencies should comply. The definitions section of this document, provided in Enclosure (1) identify a small selection of those standards which are referenced throughout this text, but agency administrators are reminded to reference the national and regional standards when designing their response capabilities.

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Existing Plans and Agreements: There are several existing plans and agreements that influence the way response agencies interoperate on the Potomac River. Because most of the existing plans and agreements not specifically developed for the maritime environment, this plan serves to link the existing documents and specify where maritime responses require unique procedures. Where applicable, these references will be noted and *italicized*.

RESPONSIBILITY AND JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction over the Potomac River is held concurrently by the United States Coast Guard for the entire length of the river; by the State of Maryland for the river upstream and downstream of the District of Columbia; and by the Commonwealth of Virginia for waters contained inside point-to-point Virginia shorelines.

For the purposes of rescue, assistance, and emergency response, these boundaries do not limit responders; rather indicate the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), which is accountable for ensuring prudent action is taken to resolve the incident.

Geographical Division: The Potomac River is over 400 miles long, and the fourth largest river along the Atlantic coast of the United States. COG extends partnerships through approximately 103 miles of this waterway including the boundary line between the Upper and Lower Potomac, which are fundamentally different geographical areas.

- Lower Potomac: The tidal (navigable) or Lower Potomac lies below Little Falls as the head of navigation and extends to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. For the purposes of this plan, and in accordance with the *U.S. Coast Pilot vol.3 - 51st edition, 2018*, the Chain Bridge, 1/2 mile downstream of Little Falls, at approximately Mile 101 on the Potomac River is the head of tidewater navigation, and is the delineation between the Upper and Lower Potomac. In this plan, the Lower Potomac refers only to those waters within the reaches of the COG region, and will therefore extend to the Rt. 301, Governor Harry Nice Bridge at ~Mile 44.
- Upper Potomac: The non-tidal (non-navigable) portion of the Potomac River, typically known as the Upper Potomac extends north from the Chain Bridge at ~Mile 101 to the confluence of the northern and southern branches of the Potomac River in Green Spring, WV. For the purposes of this plan, the Upper Potomac refers only to those waters within the reaches of the COG region, and will therefore extend to the Rt. 15 Point of Rocks Bridge, which connects Frederick County, MD to Loudoun County, VA at approximately Mile 147 of the Potomac River.

NOTE

Responses on the Lower and Upper Potomac are fundamentally different. This plan will specify where an agreement, policy, or method differs.



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- Jurisdictional Resources: The District of Columbia (DC) Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Harbor Patrol, DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS), and the USCG maintain fully staffed and dedicated boat crews for immediate vessel response 24/7/365. However, many jurisdictions maintain single assets and varying levels of staffing/availability. A listing of assets and response postures on the Lower Potomac River is provided in Enclosure (2) to assist in response planning.

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

Because the river serves as a jurisdictional boundary and each jurisdiction has varying level of response capabilities, each response on the Potomac River requires multi-agency coordination. Use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) will help provide a systematic response process to the federal, state, local, non-governmental, and commercial entities/agencies who share response authorities and responsibilities on the Potomac River.

Approximately 80% of responses share common principles, which is the ICS structure most personnel are familiar with as published in the *National Capital Region (NCR) ICS Handbook*. The modular nature of ICS allows for the 20% difference to be tailored to unique situations such as search and rescue, recovery, salvage, firefighting, pollution response, and mass casualty in a maritime environment. Incident Commanders (IC) should also be aware that these activities often lead to investigations, enforcement, and other longer-term initiatives and should therefore take care to preserve the scene.

Command and Control: Command of an incident is determined by several factors including Jurisdiction, Capability, and situational awareness. Marine Officers and crews are trained, experienced, and capable of handling most minor incidents and coordinating the initial response for a significant response. **In this agreement, we authorize the first capable responder on-scene, which qualifies as an operations boat, regardless of jurisdiction, to assume initial Incident Commander (IC).**

- Transferring Command: It is important to note, however, that the initial IC could be easily and quickly overwhelmed and must be prepared to transfer command when appropriate. Upon relinquishing command, the initial IC is typically well suited to serve as the Marine Operations Division Supervisor.
 - Considerations for an appropriate IC include:
 - **General:** Jurisdiction, vantage point/height of eye, communications, internet/mobile data terminal, etc.
 - **Vessels:** Stability of the platform, adequate staffing to handle own vessel's navigation and command duties.
 - **Land Based:** Familiarity with navigational area and understanding of available Maritime Resources.

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RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

Incident Commander: The first boat to arrive on-scene, which meets the qualifications of an Operations Boat, regardless of jurisdiction, assumes Command. The initial IC will typically handle the entire incident but when an incident is not resolved immediately, a command structure must be implemented.

The IC is responsible for the overall management of the incident to include determination of the incident objectives, establishing the priorities, and establishing an appropriate ICS organization and Incident Command Post (ICP).

- Incident Command Post: The ICP of a maritime incident should be at a location accessible by maritime response assets.
 - Considerations for an appropriate ICP include:
 - Proximity to Incident
 - Access to Waterway via Boat Launch, Marina, Sea Wall, etc.
- Unified Command (UC): Upon establishment of an ICP, all agencies with jurisdiction should be invited to join the Unified Command (UC) and all participating agencies invited to send a representative to enhance interoperability.

NOTE

A listing of adequate maritime incident ICP and Staging areas is provided in Enclosure (3) to assist the IC in response planning.

Maritime Incident Standard Objectives/Priorities

While the objectives of an incident will vary, the priorities generally involve safety, assisting victims, controlling the incident, and conservation of property. The IC should consider the following priorities when responding to a maritime incident.

- Protection and Safety of all Personnel: Implement operational risk management principles and only take necessary risks. The loss of life is never acceptable. Where the probability of saving a life exists, damage to rescue equipment is acceptable, and where that probability diminishes into a possibility, less risk is acceptable. When conducting recovery operations or rescuing property, no moderate or high level of risk is acceptable.
- Prompt removal and treatment of injured and endangered victims: Where all victims can be recovered promptly every effort should be made to quickly transfer the victims to Emergency Medical Services (EMS) units for treatment. When the



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arriving Search and Rescue Units (SRU) do not immediately resolve the report of distress they must begin to follow Search and Rescue procedures.

- Control and containment of the incident: When needed, the IC should direct capable SRUs to provide a safety zone around the incident to protect rescue personnel from traffic and to protect citizens from the hazards contained within the incident. When the incident involves a sunken vessel, fire, or mass casualty there is often a need for pollution or hazardous material response.
- Conservation of property: All capable response assets are authorized to perform rescue operations which aim to prevent the loss or damage of property. However, operations for the sole purpose of salvage or recovery should only be performed when the activity involves saving a life, prevention of environmental damage, or to remove hazards to navigation. Belonging to a public agency includes a responsibility to minimize the possibility of competition or interference with commercial enterprise, therefore salvage and routine towing operations should be contracted by the responsible party (RP) through an appropriate service provider.

Expanding Incidents: Each incident type discussed in this plan present a unique design for command and control. Most incidents will classify as a Type 5 or Type 4 event with a simple response structure. However, in the event of a Type 3, Type 2, or Type 1 incident it may be necessary to expand command, control, and communications.

- Incident Type Characteristics (from least –type 5 – to most – type 1 – complex):
 - Type 5: The incident can be handled with one or two single resources with up to six personnel. Command and General Staff positions (other than the Incident Commander) are not activated. Incident is contained within the first operational period and no written Incident Action Plan is required.
 - Type 4: Command and General Staff function are activated (only if needed). Several Single resources are required to mitigate incident. Limited to one operational period in the control phase. No written Incident Plan is required for non-HazMat incidents. A documented operational briefing is completed.
 - Type 3: When capabilities exceed initial response, the appropriate ICS positions should be added to match the complexity of the incident. Some or all of the Command and General Staff positions may be activated, as well as Division or Group Supervisor and/or Unit Leader level positions. An Incident Management Team (IMT) or incident command organization manages initial action incidents with a significant number of resources, and an extended response incident until containment/control is achieved. The

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incident may extend into multiple operational periods and a written Incident Action Plan may be required for each operational period.

- Type 2: Regional and/or national resources are required to safely and effectively manage the operations. Most or all Command and General Staff positions are filled. Operations personnel typically do not exceed 200 per operational period and the total does not exceed 500. The agency administrator/official is responsible for the incident complexity analysis, agency administrator briefings, and written delegation of authority. The incident is expected to go into multiple operational periods. A written Incident Action Plan is required for each operational period.
- Type 1: National resources are required to safely and effectively manage the operations. All Command and General Staff positions are activated, and Branches need to be established. Operations personnel often exceed 500 per operational period and total personnel will usually exceed 1,000. There is a high impact on the local jurisdiction, requiring additional staff for office administrative and support functions. The incident may result in a disaster declaration. The incident is expected to go into multiple operational periods. A written Incident Action Plan is required for each operational period.
- Span of Control: The type of incident, nature of the task, hazards and safety factors and distances between personnel and resources all influence span of control considerations. NIMS suggests that effective span of control on incidents may vary from three to seven, with five being optimal. Each section below will address specific ICS suggestions for expanding incidents.

COMMUNICATIONS

The most critical aspect of an effective response is communications. Beginning with the collection of initial reports, notification of all available and capable resources, and finally communications among those resources.

NOTE

Notification and Dispatch procedures for maritime incidents are under development through the COG PSAP working group. Specific capabilities, technology, and procedures will be expanded upon in Appendix A of this plan.

Initial reports should be collected as quickly and completely as possible with a focus on collecting five critical pieces of information displayed in **Figure 1** which are imperative to sizing up the incident and dispatching the correct resources to the correct location.

1. Location/ Position of Emergency	[] Lat/Long	[] Geographic Reference
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2. Number of Persons On Board	Adults:	Children:	Total:
3. Nature of Emergency:	(are any people in the water?)		
4. Description of Vessel	Name:	Length:	
	Make/Type:	Color:	
5. Have all persons on board the vessel put on Personal Flotation Devices / adequate number of PFD's available? Y / N			

Figure 1

Notifications to maritime emergency responders must be prompt and comprehensive. It is imperative that all applicable jurisdictions, utilizing all available means are notified.

- U.S. Coast Guard Notification is critical during any maritime emergency. In addition to holding many Federal Authorities with civil responsibilities, the USCG's sole mission is to protect the users of the waterway, defend against threats delivered by the waterway, and protect the waterway itself. Upon notification of the USCG, the following notifications/communications will occur:
 - Emergency Broadcasts are issued to the public and response agencies via VHF-FM CH16.
 - **Urgent Marine Information Broadcast (UMIB)** notifies the public of an emergency, in which they may be in the vicinity of, and able to assist immediately or provide critical information to authorities.
 - **Safety Marine Information Broadcast (SMIB)** notifies the public of a danger, in which they may be near, and advises them to stay clear.
 - **Marine Assistance Request Broadcast (MARB)** notifies the public of a mariner in need of non-emergency assistance, in which they may be able to provide to prevent an emergency from developing.
 - Direction Finding (DF) on VHF-FM 16: In the tidal or Lower Potomac VHF-FM 16 is the primary hailing and distress frequency for vessel-to-vessel communication and the U.S. Coast Guard. These transmissions are monitored and recorded 24 hours /day with direction finding (DF) capabilities through the Rescue 21 (R-21) Nationwide Network.
 - SAROPS: Search and Rescue Optimal Planning System (SAROPS) is a Monte Carlo-based software system used by the Coast Guard for maritime search planning. SAROPS uses thousands of simulated particles generated by user inputs in a graphical user interface. SAROPS was designed to

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effectively use higher resolution gridded environmental data to provide superior accuracy in search object drift.

- Computer program used to assist on-scene search and rescue assets by directing them to areas maximizing probability of success in locating victims.
 - Able to generate search pattern summaries and search effectiveness reports.
 - Can be initiated by USCG-NCR at the request of the Incident Commander or On-scene-coordinator.
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- Public Safety Access Point (PSAP) Notification and Dispatch procedures serve as the most commonly leveraged method of notification and dispatch on the Potomac River. It is imperative that the PSAP strive to ascertain the nearest capable response assets available for dispatch. To facilitate this:
 - A list of existing maritime resources and their response posture is included in Enclosure (2). U.S. Coast Guard Station Washington shall update and distribute this list annually to all agencies and PSAPs.
 - All agencies will provide updated capabilities and availability postures annually to Stationwashington@uscg.mil when requested.
 - Charles County has developed an integrated Geographic Information System (GIS) layer and will update and distribute annually to all NCR PSAPs. GIS layer available here: <https://arcg.is/04frvb>.
 - All PSAPs will upload GIS layers into their Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and incorporate this product into their dispatch procedures.
 - If a natural CAD relationship between organizations does not exist, PSAPs will set automatic notifications through CAD Email.
 - Any notification method not listed but deemed to be useful and effective should be utilized.

NOTE

Notification and Dispatch procedures for maritime incidents are under development through the COG PSAP working group. Specific capabilities, technology, and procedures will be expanded upon in Appendix A of this plan.



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For the purpose of this document the following terms are defined:

- Zone – The grouping of talkgroups or channels within a subscriber radio.
- Talkgroup – Virtual radio channels created for and used by trunked radio systems.
- Channel – A dedicated radio frequency.

The **Interoperability NCR Maritime Interoperability Zone** is designed to group maritime tactical talkgroups and VHF-FM channels from multiple jurisdictions into a single radio zone to provide consistent and reliable interoperability in the maritime domain.

Applicability: Use of this zone applies to signatories of the *Greater Metropolitan Area Inter-Jurisdictional Mutual Aid Communications Memorandum of Understanding* who hold authority or assist with responses on the Upper and Lower Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. The primary hosts for talkgroups within this zone typically hold jurisdiction on these rivers and conduct responses with maritime-based command and control. Where superseding communications plans exist and/or land-based responses utilize vessels but all

command and control resides on land and an interoperability solution is not otherwise required, usage of these talkgroups may or may not apply.

Maritime Based Incidents – Are primarily going to occur in the navigable waters of the lower Potomac and Anacostia rivers. These are responses where waterborne assets are the primary responders because the incident is not accessible from land.

Land-based incidents – Are primarily going to occur in non-navigable waters. These are responses where waterborne assets are typically all launched from the shoreline and are merely utilized as a strike team or taskforce, such as a Swiftwater rescue incident or incidents where waterborne are assisting land based companies with water supply and fire suppression of land accessible structures.

NOTE

**Navigable waters are defined as waters which are accessible only by boat and as that are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide, as described in 33 CFR 329.4

Channel Assignment: The PSAP shall assign the applicable NCR Maritime talkgroup to all resources dispatched/responding to a maritime incident. If the AHJ PSAP is unable to operate on the designated Maritime talkgroup, the AHJ's shared talkgroup may be utilized as a command channel to communicate with the Incident Commander who will monitor both the AHJ's command talkgroup and the Maritime talkgroup.



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- Geographical Applicability: Incident channels shall correspond with the geographical applicability listed in **Table 1**, which aligns with natural AHJ boundaries. Incidents, which occur where the AHJ is unclear, and/or which drift into neighboring jurisdictions, will begin on the channel assigned by the dispatching PSAP and shift only as directed by the Incident Commander.

NOTE

Host Jurisdictions who conduct responses in waters where no talk group is provided are encouraged to make agreements for responses into waters not covered in this plan.

Talkgroup and Channel Selection: The following channel lineup shall be placed into a single radio zone and should be published in the *NCR Communications Interoperability Group (CIG) Fleet Map* and programmed in all subscriber radios within the NCR.

NCR Maritime Interoperability Zone			
ASSIGNMENT	TALKGROUP	PRIMARY USE	GEOGRAPHICAL APPLICABILITY
Ch 1/A	FFX 42L MAR	Maritime Hailing	Lower Potomac
Ch 2/B	FFX 42M MAR	Maritime Operations	FFC Waters
Ch 3/C	CH10A 12MAR A	Maritime Operations	CC Waters
Ch 4/D	CH10A 13MAR B	Maritime Operations	
Ch 5/E	PWC 51J	Maritime Operations	PWC Waters
Ch 6/F	PWC 51K	Maritime Operations	
Ch 7/G	PG Marine 1	Maritime Operations	PGC Waters
Ch 8/H	PG Marine 2E*	Encrypted Maritime Operations	Lower Potomac
Ch 9/I	7 Marine 1	Maritime Operations	MC/Upper Potomac
Ch 10/J	7 Marine 2E	Maritime Operations	
Ch 11/K	DC MIC 1 MAIN	Maritime Operations	DC Waters
Ch 12/L	DC MIC 2 OPS1	Maritime Operations	
Ch 13/M	DC MIC 3 OPS2	Maritime Operations	
Ch 14/N	DC MIC 4(E*)	Maritime Operations and Encrypted NSSE Events	
Ch 15/O	AHJ CHOICE-or-VHF81A- - or DC MIC 5E *	MIC 5E Encrypted Maritime Operations and NSSE Events	DC Waters or Local Use



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Ch 16/P	AHJ CHOICE-or-VHF16*	International Hailing & Distress	Lower Potomac
*Encrypted and VHF talkgroups are not available in all subscribers' radios. These assignments may be changed by individual jurisdictions based on current capabilities.			

Table 1

Talkgroup Usage: Each jurisdiction has provided at least two (2) talkgroups for maritime operational use. The first talkgroup is the primary response talkgroup for that agency's jurisdiction. The subsequent talkgroups are available for additional incidents or separation of command and operations.

Hailing: The first channel in the NCR Maritime Zone is FFX 42L which is designated as the Maritime Hailing channel for the Lower Potomac. All response assets on routine patrol shall monitor FFX 42L unless otherwise assigned/engaged. FFX 42L shall be utilized to hail and coordinate with nearby response assets prior to the assignment of an incident channel.

NOTE

VHF-FM Ch16 remains the International Hailing and Distress Frequency, however, the range of FFX 42L greatly exceeds the line of site of VHF-FM and can alert assets on patrol in neighboring jurisdictions

Expanding Incident Communications: Expanding incidents may require additional talkgroups assignments from the NCR Maritime Zone. The IC will determine the need for additional talkgroup or channel assignments and shift responders as necessary.

- **DC MIC Channels:** The DC Maritime Incident Channels (MIC) (pronounced "mikes") are the primary public safety communications talkgroups for maritime and aviation assets, along with supporting ground units, for incidents occurring within the navigable jurisdictional waters of DC. DC MIC 1 is intended to create a Maritime Domain Awareness Net for the waters surrounding the Nation's Capital by being the primary operations talkgroup for all maritime operations in DC waters. DC MIC 1 will be monitored 24/7/365 by DC Fireboat, MPD harbor, MPD Falcon Base, USPP Eagles Nest and USCG Sector NCR Command Center, as well as during the operating hours of USCG Station Washington. Public safety and government vessels and aviation assets from other jurisdictions should use MIC 1 to communicate with DC Fireboat and DC MPD Harbor units when in DC waters.
 - **DC MIC 1 MAIN:** Routine operation, primary incident operations.
 - **DC MIC 2 OPS 1:** Expanded incident operations
 - **DC MIC 3 OPS 2:** Expanded incident operations



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- DC MIC 4(E*) Expanded incident operations and Encrypted NSSE patching. This talkgroup will be backwards compatible for non-encrypted users except during NSSE events until a time where it will go encrypted full time.
- DC MIC 5 ENCRPT: Encrypted incident operations and NSSE patching.

DC Fireboat Base will monitor the main interoperability hailing channel FFX42L in quarters and when underway outside of DC jurisdictional waters.

Encryption: Four encrypted talkgroups exist within this zone, the primary talkgroup being PG MARITIME 2E, which is available for use by any jurisdiction in need of an encrypted channel who is in range of the PG communications network. The second encrypted channel is 7 Marine 2E. The third and fourth encrypted talkgroups are DC MIC(4*) and DC MIC 5E. (Additional agencies can be added for NSSE interoperability by contacting DC's radio managers)

Primary Understanding that the purpose of the NCR Maritime Zone is to migrate public safety maritime communications from Marine VHF-FM channels which are line of sight only and less secure than talkgroups on a public safety trunked radio system. VHF-FM Ch16 is the International Hailing and Distress Frequency and remains the primary boat to boat communications method on the Lower Potomac River. This channel is required by law to be monitored by many commercial vessels and large recreational vessels and is monitored by the U.S. Coast Guard and several local jurisdictions. Subscribers with multi-band capabilities will program this channel into the 16th assignment.

- Charles County Emergency Services hosts VHF-FM Ch16 and has the capability to patch a subscriber radio, allowing responders to communicate with mariners in distress, when a VHF-FM radio is not available.

Secondary VHF-FM: In the event VHF-FM Ch16 is overloaded, disabled, or otherwise unavailable to the responders, the secondary VHF-FM Interoperability Channel for the Lower Potomac is VHF-FM Ch81A. This channel is a USCG working frequency and will be made available to all participants within this agreement by MOU.

Monitoring Requirements: It's not possible to monitor all talkgroups/channels at all times. The fully equipped vessel will monitor VHF-FM Ch16, FFX 42L, and their jurisdictional dispatch channel. Upon being dispatched to an incident, the response boat will announce the incident on FFX42L and switch to the incident channel. Vessels without this capability will, at a minimum attempt to monitor VHF-FM Ch16 and their jurisdictional dispatch. Upon being dispatched to an incident, the vessel will switch from dispatch to the incident channel.

**Units stationed in DC Waters shall monitor MIC1.*



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***If Sector NCR upgrades their capabilities, they will rebroadcast incident alerts on VHF-FM Ch16, FFX 42L, and MIC 1.*

SEARCH AND RESCUE

A search and rescue (SAR) incident requires seamless coordination and immediate response by every available resource to prevent loss of life. It is imperative that the agency receiving the initial report notifies the USCG and the neighboring/opposite shore jurisdictions to maximize the effectiveness of the response.

The minimum command structure required for every search and rescue incident should include an IC and a SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC).

SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC): U.S. Coast Guard Sector Maryland-NCR is the SMC for the Potomac River and all connected tributaries and can be contacted via VHF-FM channel 16 or via phone at (410) 576-2525. Responsibilities of the SMC include:

- Gather detailed information relating to the distress situation;
- Issue an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast (UMIB);
- Notify stakeholders in the area;
- Coordinate with Marine Operations/On-Scene Coordinator (OSC);
- Use search planning tools to optimize resource utilization (SAROPS);
- Ensure all SAR documentation is completed; and
- Assist with next of kin (NOK) briefings.

Incident Commander (IC) for SAR: The first boat to arrive on-scene, which meets the qualifications of an Operations Boat, regardless of jurisdiction, assumes Command.

- Assume Command: Establish contact with the AHJ via Tactical Communications Plan or otherwise designated channel, SMC via VHF-FM channel 16 and begin to coordinate with assisting jurisdictions.
- Death, body recovery, and NOK notifications:
 - When searching for persons overboard or possible drowning victims, utilize FLIR, cadaver dogs, side scan sonar, and dive teams.

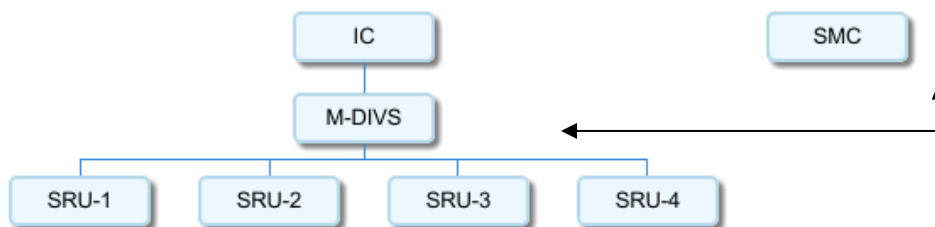


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- The AHJ over the scene of a body recovery shall be notified immediately.
- The primary law enforcement agency handling the investigation and the USCG SMC shall coordinate NOK notifications.
- For airline crashes, airline companies are responsible for making NOK Notifications.

Marine Operations Division: The IC will hold these duties in the absence of a Marine Operations Division (M-DIVS). In addition to being a Division Supervisor in the ICS construct, Marine Operations serves as the OSC in the U.S. Maritime SAR System. The most capable Operations Boat (or the initial IC) should serve as Marine Operations and direct SAR Response Units (SRU) in accordance with direction given by the IC and the SMC. Duties and responsibilities include:

- Assume Marine Operations/On Scene Coordinator (OSC): Establish contact with SRUs and SMC via Tactical Communications Plan.
- Deploy Datum to mark position.
- Maintain operational control and coordination of all SAR Response Units (SRU) utilizing assigned on-scene channels.
 - Provide initial brief and search instructions.
 - Obtain search results from SRUs.
- Conduct Accountability checks for all SRUs and report to AHJ and/or IC every 20 minutes or as directed.
- Report overall search results to IC and SMC.
- Brief IC and SMC for concurrence prior to suspension of active search efforts.



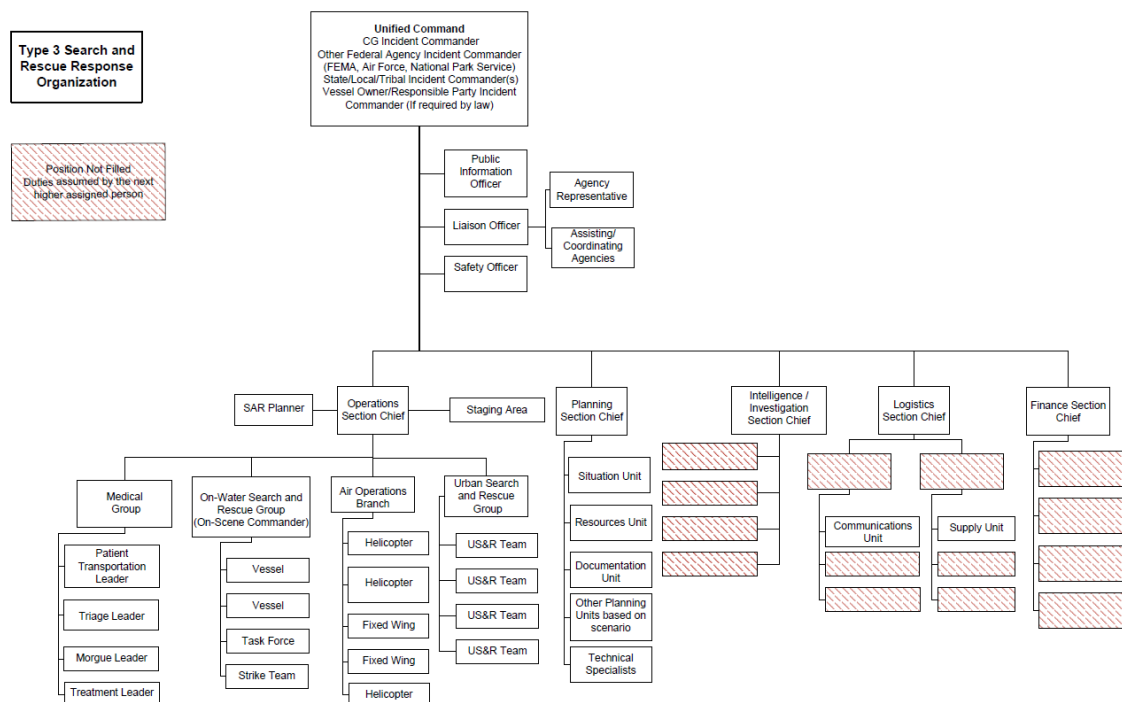
SAR Response Unit: All responding vessels shall provide assistance utilizing their unique capabilities and authorities in coordination with the Marine Operations Division.

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- Investigate and identify all potential targets on the way to the scene.
- Check-in: Every SRU shall check in with Marine Operations.
- Conduct Initial Search or tasking as provided by Marine Operations.
- Report the start, completion, and results of all effort.
- Establish contact with victims/witnesses to collect information:
 - Time this emergency occurred, weather conditions, tides/current and boat traffic at that time, contact information, other witnesses.
 - Confirm location of incident using geographic locations and Latitude/Longitude coordinates if possible.
 - For an overdue boater:
 - Time of departure, route of travel, last port of call, amount of fuel onboard, range of vessel, experience and health conditions.
 - Detailed description of persons and vessels in question including make/model, year, size, color, and registration numbers.
 - Preliminary and Extended Communications (Pre-Comms/Ex-Comms): Interview/investigate marinas and possible port of calls along direct route and all possible routes, witnesses, and/or police departments & conduct a wellness check at the subject's residence.

Expanded Incident: When the IC begins to expand the response construct, some or all of the positions in the following diagram should be considered.

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HAZARDOUS MATERIALS OPERATIONS

A hazardous material (HAZMAT) incident requires seamless coordination and immediate response by every available resource to prevent loss of life and minimize environmental damage. It is imperative that the agency receiving the initial report notifies the Coast Guard and the neighboring/ opposite shore jurisdictions to maximize the effectiveness of the response.

The minimum command structure required for every HAZMAT incident should include an IC and an OSC.

On Scene Coordinator: The USCG Sector Maryland-NCR is the OSC for the Potomac River and all connected tributaries and can be contacted via VHF-FM channel 16 or via phone at (410) 576-2525. All instances of pollution or the potential for pollution in a Federal Waterway must be also be reported to the National Response Center (NRC) hotline at 1-800-424-8802.

The USCG along with 16 Federal and 12 local and state agencies throughout Maryland, Virginia, and Washington D.C. have developed a detailed Area Contingency Plan (ACP), which describes the strategy for a coordinated response to any vessels or facilities, which experience:

- Discharge or substantial threat of discharge of oil.
- Release or threat of release of a hazardous substance.

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- Exposure or threat of exposure to harmful biological substances.
- Exposure to or threat of an exposure to a radiological substance.

Agencies with marine HAZMAT responsibilities should become familiar with the ACP:

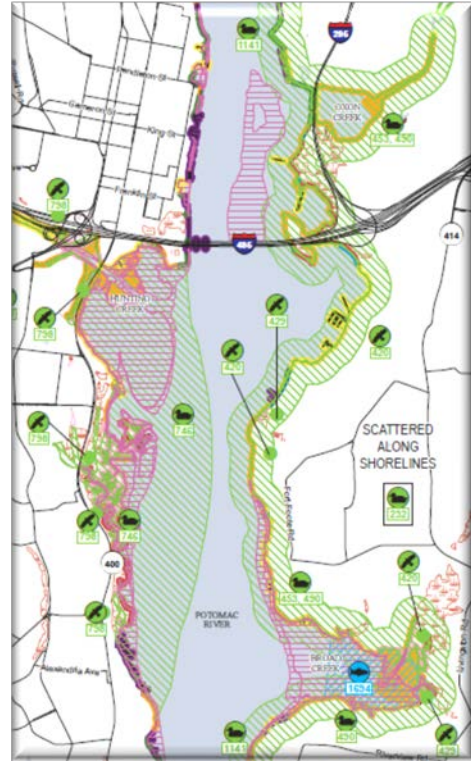
<https://homeport.uscg.mil/my-homeport/contingency-plans/area-contingency-plan?cotpid=1&Source=https://homeport.uscg.mil/port-directory/maryland-ncr>

Incident Commander (IC) for HAZMAT: The AHJ over the incident will assign an appropriate IC who will evaluate site conditions, implement response operations, hazard controls, and ensure personal protective equipment (PPE). The IC shall maintain close coordination with the OSC and establish a Unified Command (UC) as early in the incident as possible. The UC should consider the Responsible Party (RP) for inclusion.

- Utilization of Personnel and Assets:
 - Utilize resources in accordance with their Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training level;
 - Law enforcement must immediately restrict access to the area from non-emergency personnel and isolate areas downstream from the public. Consider establishment of a Safety Zone;
 - A decontamination site should be established for patients, responders, and equipment. (i.e. Boats, Boom, PPE, etc.); and
 - Hazardous materials may adversely affect integrity of PPE and inflatable boats. Use of metal boats should be considered over inflatable boats.
- Safety Considerations:
 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must include Personal Flotation Devices (PFD); and

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- Boat crews may transport HAZMAT response personnel but shall NOT enter the contaminated zone without appropriate respiratory, dermal, eye, and foot protection to include HAZWOPER PPE levels A, B, C, and D. The maritime environment poses an extreme hazard to encapsulated personnel (Level A). The IC should consider alternative action plans before committing encapsulated personnel to on water operations. Specially trained and equipped teams may be available through coordination with the OSC.
- Environmental Protection:
 - Initial Booming Strategies should aim to protect environmentally sensitive areas, mapped in detail by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Potomac River's analysis is contained in the *Chesapeake Bay & Outer Coast of Maryland and Virginia Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI); Volume 3*: <https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/maps-and-spatial-data/download-esi-maps-and-gis-data.html> Figure (2) provides an example of an ESI map of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and National Harbor; the pink, red, and maroon highlighted shorelines are considered the highest levels of sensitivity.
- Radiological or Nuclear (R/N) detection:
 - In the event of R/N detection during a response, the *NCR Securing the Cities (STC) Operations Plan* should be followed to ensure trained, equipped, and proficient R/N detection responders are utilized and follow detection and response protocols. The following agencies are members of the Maritime NCR Preventative Radiological/Nuclear Detection (PRND) Task Force and are committed to providing resources and trained personnel in support of the STC program.
 - Metro Police Department –Harbor Patrol;
 - DC Fire & Emergency Services;
 - Alexandria Fire Department;
 - Maryland Natural Resources Police;
 - Prince George's County Police;
 - Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority;
 - USCG Station Washington; and

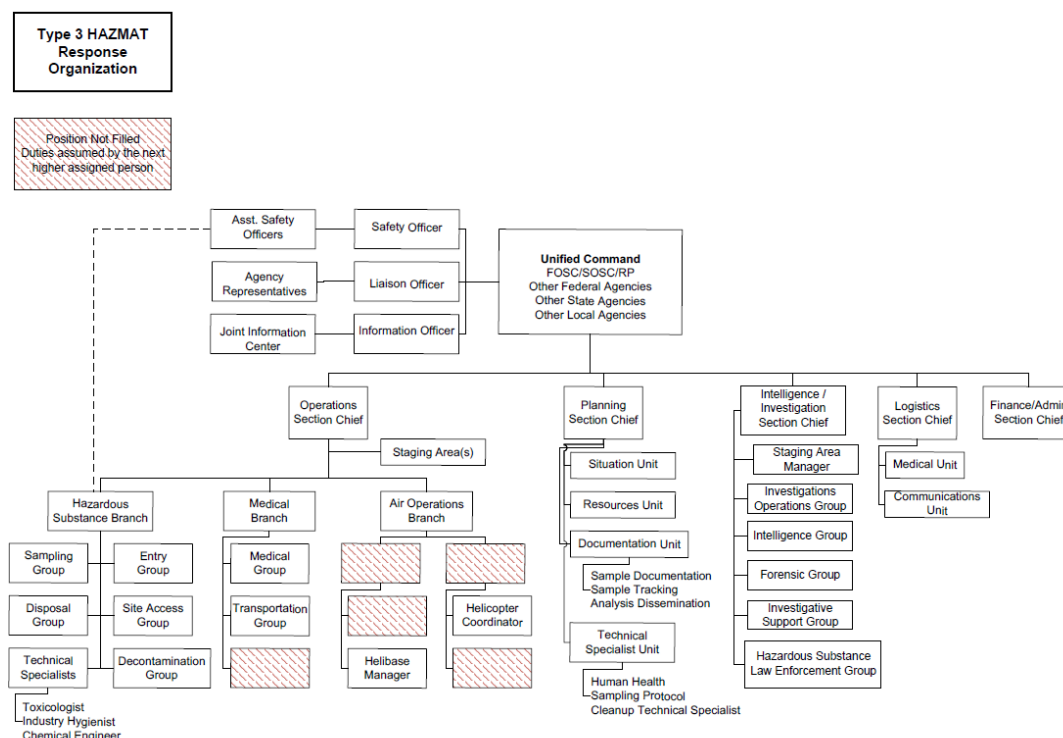


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■ USCG Station St. Indigoes.

- Following initial safety precautions and primary screening, an internal secondary screener from any of the listed agencies can provide isotope identification, make the proper notifications and adjudicate the alarm IAW the *NCR STC Concept of Operations Plan*.
- The *NCR STC Concept of Operations Plan* and *Information Exchange Plan* is **For Official Use Only (FOUO)** and will not be attached to this document however, the plan (including a maritime annex) is on file at PRND Task Force units and can be provided upon request.
- Any incident involving suspicious activity, terrorist threats, or actual incidents with a potential or actual terrorist nexus shall be immediately reported to the FBI via the JTTF or directly to regional FBI WMD Coordinator(s). Additionally, any such incident that involves chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear materials, shall be reported to the regional FBI WMD Coordinator(s). The 24-hour telephone number for the FBI's Washington Field Office (WFO) is 202-278-2000.

Expanded Incident: When the IC begins to expand the response construct, some or all of the positions in the following diagram should be considered.



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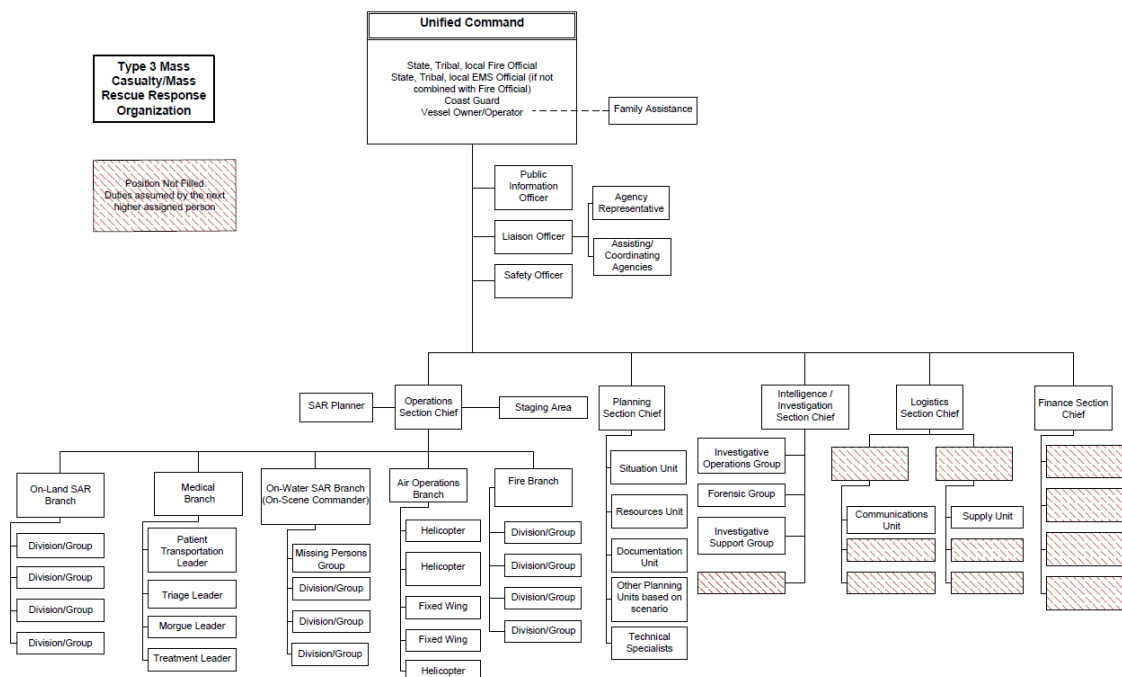
MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT

A Mass Casualty Incident is defined as an incident which “Severely taxes or overwhelms department resources” and is further defined by Northern Virginia and the *National Capital Region PLAYBOOK, 2017* as “10 or more casualties reported”, while DC FEMS activates a MCI resources when 9 casualties have been reported. There is a potential (MCI) occurring in or near the Potomac River in two separate event types: pre-staged and unforeseen events. The unforeseen events such as train derailment, large or complex HAZMAT/WMD incidents, active shooters or fires on cruise vessels will require an immediate response and dispatching of resources. A pre-staged event such as a National Special Security Event, Marathon, or Marine Event will most likely have units pre-staged and standing by to activate a response.

NOTE The NCR does not have a formal Maritime Mass Casualty Plan. This plan is under development will be inserted into this document upon its completion as Appendix (3).

Any MCI requires a unified effort from maritime responders. The *National Capital Region Mass Casualty Response Resources, 2012* lays out patient transportation in detail, however the paper does not make mention of maritime incidents or maritime response resources which further strengthens the need for a maritime mass casualty plan.

Expanded Incident: When the IC begins to expand the response construct, some or all of the positions in the following diagram should be considered.



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Strong leadership and accountability by officers will be necessary to ensure that untrained rescuers are not placed into dangerous situations due to the stress and confusion that will occur early in such an incident.

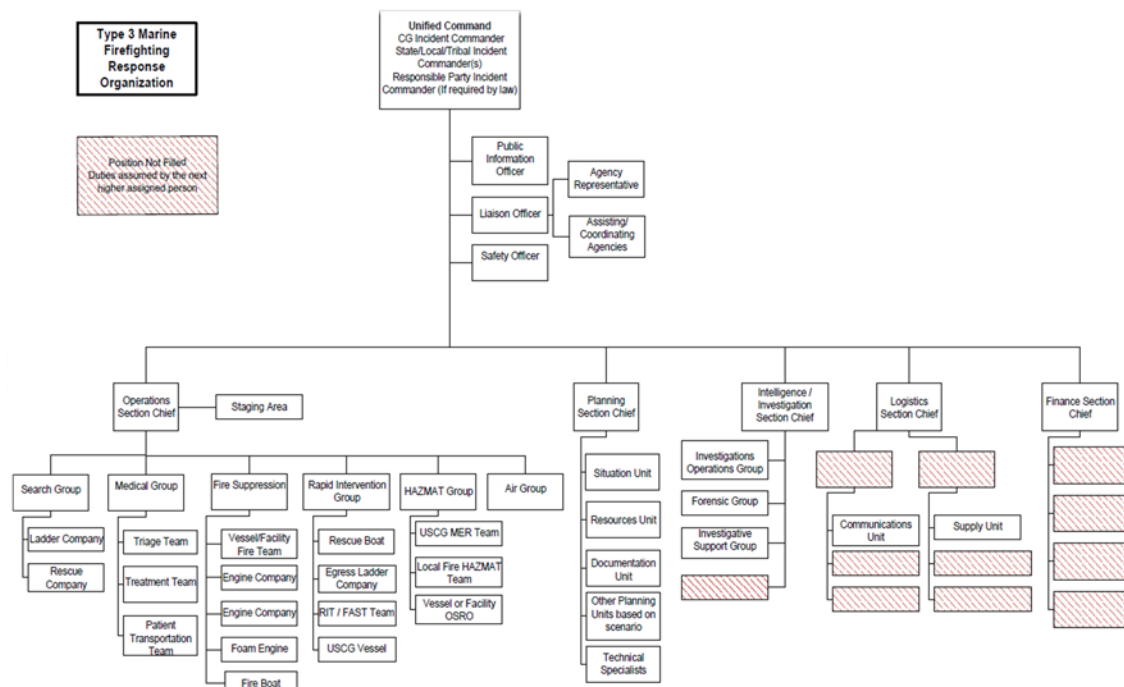
- Fatigue must be managed through appropriate work/rest cycles.
- When the possibility of victims and wreckage being in the water exists, boats must establish a forward lookout and proceed with caution.
- During recovery operations, additional rescuers and investigators may be transported by boat for recovery and investigation operations.
- Boat crews shall take all precautions available to ensure the safety of these personnel.
- Operations are likely to be prolonged and require additional PPE; arrangements for additional gear procurement must be made early on.

MARINE FIRE

Special Considerations for a fire: Units with firefighting capability shall be guided by applicable NFPA guidelines. Units without these capabilities shall establish a safety zone for emergency responder actions and civilian boaters, and other incident priorities.

Expanded Incident: When the IC begins to expand the response construct, some or all of the positions in the following diagram should be considered.

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EVACUATION PLAN

Every major metropolitan area in the country is faced with the chance of disaster and must identify evacuation options. The Potomac River serves as a maritime highway in and out of the NCR which can assist in performing an evacuation. The *District of Columbia Maritime Evacuation Plan* details the commercial and government cooperation needed during such an emergency. This plan identifies high capacity boats and boat landings which could be leveraged if needed.

ICs who wish to activate this plan should request assistance from the USCG who will coordinate the movement of vessels to and from the designated landings.

An Evacuation is typically coupled with an emergency which is endangering citizens and Incident Commanders should take caution to prevent sending a responder or commercial assistance resource into a contaminated, or dangerous environment.

SPECIALIZED MARITIME CAPABILITIES

Helicopter Operations: The resource listing provided in **Enclosure 2** outlines agencies with helicopter and aviation assets available to respond to maritime incidents.

- The use of helicopters in the initial search or investigation is valuable in covering a large area quickly, sizing up the scene and providing immediate assistance. Helicopters may be used for:

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- Aerial reconnaissance and search;
 - Transport of patient rescuers and equipment;
 - Back up for rescue boats or providing lighting; and
 - Rescue of victims when they are in immediate danger, or when delayed rescue efforts may affect mortality of the patient.
- Helicopter hoisting operations off a vessel can pose great hazard to the aircrew, boat crew, and to whatever is being hoisted. The safety of helicopter hoist operations is greatly improved if the crew of the vessel is briefed in advance on what is required and when personnel have been properly trained. The following considerations apply:
 - Secure the boat radar and any distracting lighting;
 - Stow all loose gear on vessel and identify snag hazards;
 - Conduct briefing with Helicopter prior to it being directly over-head;
 - Establish course and speed to be maintained during hoisting operation;
 - Establish a dedicated Safety Observer;
 - Don appropriate protective gear such as helmet, goggles, hearing protection, life jacket, etc;
 - Establish emergency break-away procedures (never attach anything to the boat which is also attached to the helicopter); and
 - A helicopter in flight builds up dangerous levels of static electricity; any device lowered from a helicopter must come into contact with the boat, water, or “Deadman’s Stick” before touching it.
 - The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has placed Special Flight Restriction Areas (SFRA) around the NCR, which complicate Aeronautical SAR operations during mass rescues and evacuations. Aviation Commands and Hospitals have developed and documented procedures for coordinating within this airspace in the P-56 Nightingale Plan. The document is Law Enforcement Sensitive and will not be included in any enclosures or annexes of this plan; however, IC’s may utilize the code word “Nightingale” during a mass rescue operation to activate the plan.

Special Purpose Watercraft: Many of the vessels in the area have forward-looking infrared (FLIR) units similar to those on helicopters. The use of shallow draft vessels, airboats, and



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hovercraft can be used in shallow and near shore areas. Additionally, DCFEMS Fireboat John Glenn has ice-breaking capabilities.

ATTACHMENTS (Future)

ENCLOSURE (1)	Definitions
ENCLOSURE (2)	NCR Lower Potomac Resource Listing
ENCLOSURE (3)	ICP and Staging Area Listing
APPENDIX (A)	NCR Maritime Notifications and Dispatch Plan
APPENDIX (C)	NCR Maritime Mass Casualty Plan