MARINE GUIDANCE NOTE

MGN 225 (M+F)

Radio Medical Advice For Ships At Sea

Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators and Managers, Masters, Skippers of Fishing Vessels and Pleasure Vessels and all Seafarers

Summary

This Marine Guidance Note provides information on how to obtain radio medical advice when a medical incident or medical emergency arises at sea. It explains that contact should first be made with HM Coastguard, who will then put the caller in touch with one of the UK's designated Radio Medical Advice centres.

1. European legislation on minimum safety and health requirements for improved medical treatment on board vessels (Council Directive 92/29/EEC) requires Member States to designate one or more centres to provide radio medical advice to ships. For the UK, the officially designated centres are at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth and at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

2. Radio medical advice is available free of charge to provide support in cases where an individual suffers either illness or an accident at sea. The advice is intended to supplement the first aid training of the ship's crew and the written guidance that is available, such as the Ship's Captain's Medical Guide.

3. To obtain radio medical advice Masters and Skippers should first contact HM Coastguard. Contact should be made on either MF DSC, VHF DSC, VHF Channel 16 or INMARSAT. Urgent calls for assistance may be broadcast using the normal Urgency prowords "PAN PAN " as follows :

   "PAN PAN" x3
   "All Stations" x3 OR Individual Coastguard / Coast Station x3 (If name known)
   "This is [ship name]" x3
   "Call Sign ……."
   "In Position ……."
   "I require medical advice"
   "Over"

   Users should not use mobile telephones for seeking medical advice or assistance.

4. The Coastguard or Coast Station will direct the caller to a working frequency and is obliged to seek basic details, including brief details of the casualty's illness or injury, type of vessel, next port of call or nearest at which the casualty could be landed, confirmation of position, and if mid-ocean, to discuss with Coastguard when likely to be in range of helicopter. The Coastguard will then put the caller through to a doctor at one of the radio medical advice centres. Medical Staff who deal with radio medical advice calls have some familiarisation training so should be aware of the special

circumstances and limited facilities likely to be available at sea. Depending on the circumstances and the advice of the doctor, the Coastguard may assist in arranging evacuation either by helicopter or lifeboat.

5. Any enquiries about this Notice should be addressed to :

Seafarer Health and Safety Branch
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton SO15 1EG

Tel 02380 329249
Fax 02380 329251
Email : seafarer_h&s@mcga.gov.uk

June 2002
MC 11/6/15 Pt2

Department for
Transport