

RECOMMENDATIONS

ICAO SAR Seminar and SAREX, Chennai, India, 7-11 March 2005

An ICAO SAR Seminar was held in conjunction with the Bay of Bengal SAREX at Chennai, India from 7 to 11 March 2005. The SAR seminar focused on the development of SAR cooperation and coordination and addressed ICAO requirements for States to provide SAR services and agreements in accordance with Annex 12.

A comprehensive briefing was provided by India on its extensive involvement in the tsunami emergency that struck the Indian Ocean area on 26 December 2004. Other States present at the seminar that were affected by the tsunami disaster also briefed the meeting on their emergency responses and the valuable lessons learnt were appreciated by the seminar.

The seminar, in its review of the information provided and discussions held, made a list of recommendations as shown below. The ATM/AIS/SAR/SG/15 meeting (Bangkok, Thailand, July 25-29, 2005) reviewed the recommendations and agreed that they should be taken into account by States in the region when considering their SAR activities.

Recommendations

- 1) The seminar was of the view that the establishment of RCCs should be made on the basis of need and risk. This strategy allows for, on the one hand, regionalized SAR service provision in areas of light traffic density and few resources, and, on the other hand, dedicated facilities in States with high traffic density of sufficient justification to warrant RCC staff appropriately trained and specializing in SAR;
- 2) Rapid and accurate collation and dissemination of SAR information is essential to ensure timely and appropriate SAR response to operational units. This could be most effectively achieved by using up to date and automated technology which can be supported by an appropriate specialized infrastructure and States should take full advantage of such systems in equipping their RCCs.
- 3) The seminar highlighted the importance of including in the seminar all organizations involved in providing emergency services for search and rescue, therefore, annual exercises should be held involving all parties concerned.
- 4) The seminar recognized the importance of clearly specifying the duties and responsibilities of all participating organizations in a search and rescue operation. Therefore, procedures should be provided that specify coordination requirements including reporting, lines of responsibility and standardized formats for documentation. This work can be best facilitated by the establishment of an appropriately representative Search and Rescue Coordinating Committee in the development of a National SAR Plan.
- 5) SAR agreements with neighbouring States should take into harmonized account both maritime and aeronautical requirements giving due balance to matters of sovereignty and expeditious mutual access by foreign SAR aircraft.

- 6) The seminar recognized that an aircraft crash involving a large commercial jet into a densely populated area could result in a major disaster of wide ramifications and appropriately specialized parallel disaster management units need to coordinate with civil aviation SAR agencies in the development and execution of broadly based plans.
- 7) In light of the earthquake and tsunami disaster on 26 December 2004 and lack of public awareness of the large-scale risk to life and property posed by this natural phenomena, the seminar considered that there needs to be a public awareness programmes targeting all sections of the community regarding earthquake and tsunami etc, and precautions and actions to be taken to minimize the loss of life and property.
- 8) The seminar, in considering the response by the international community to the tsunami emergency relief, recognized that there had been an urgent and rushed response that significantly increased air traffic in a short period of time to air lift aid to the disaster areas. In some notable cases, the airport capacity, resources and infrastructure were inadequate. This could significantly impede the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies. Therefore, the Seminar requested that ICAO consider undertaking a study with the States concerned to examine the air operations that took place and provide appropriate guidelines on handling major disaster situations.
- 9) States should review the ICAO SAR capability table compiled by APANPIRG and update the Asia and Pacific Regional Office accordingly.
- 10) The seminar acknowledged the highly successful large-scale land and sea search and rescue exercises that were held involving multi-disciplinary emergency response units, and urged ICAO to organize annual regional SAR seminars and SAREX's similar to the one held in Chennai.
- 11) The seminar urged the States to hasten completion of SAR Letters of Agreement and to provide a copy to the Regional Office.
- 12) The seminar recognized the vital operational and economic contribution made to effective SAR service provision by the Cospas-Sarsat system and recommended that States participate as a matter of priority.
- 13) The seminar, noting the promising developments and the desirability of producing a low cost SAR emergency beacon for a much wider user community which would greatly benefit personal safety, encouraged the continued development and manufacture of this product.

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