

His Majesty's Coastguard



HM Coastguard (HMCG) is a section of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency responsible for the initiation and co-ordination of all maritime search and rescue (SAR) within the UK Maritime Search and Rescue Region. This includes the mobilisation, organisation and tasking of adequate resources to respond to persons either in distress at sea, or to persons at risk of injury or death on the cliffs or shoreline of the United Kingdom. It is also responsible for land based search and rescue helicopter operations from 2015.

HM Coastguard is not a military force nor law enforcement agency, with coastal defence being the responsibility of the Royal Navy, law enforcement being the responsibility of the local territorial police force and maritime border control being the responsibility of Border Force. However, the organisation is a uniformed service.

History

HM Coastguard was established in 1822. In 1809 the Preventative Water Guard was established, which may be regarded as the immediate ancestor of HM Coastguard. Its primary objective was to prevent smuggling, but it was also responsible for giving assistance to shipwrecks. For this reason, each Water Guard station was issued with Manby's Mortar (the mortar fired a shot with a line attached from the shore to the wrecked ship and was used for many years). In 1821 a committee of enquiry recommended that responsibility for the Preventative Water Guard should be transferred from HM Treasury to the Board of Customs. The Board of Custom and the Board of Excise each had their own long-established preventative forces: shore-based Riding Officers and sea-going Revenue Cruisers. The committee recommended the consolidation of these various related services. The Treasury agreed, and in a Minute dated 15 January 1822 directed that they be placed under the authority of the Board of Customs and named the Coast Guard.

The new Coast Guard inherited a number of shore stations and watch houses from its predecessor bodies as well as several coastal vessels, and these provided bases for its operations over the following years. In 1829 the first Coast Guard instructions were published, dealing mainly with discipline and the prevention of smuggling; they also stipulated that when a wreck took place the Coast Guard was responsible for taking all possible action to save lives, taking charge of the vessel and protecting property. In 1831, the Coast Guard took over duties from the Coast Blockade for the Suppression of Smuggling (which had been run by the Admiralty from a string of Martello Towers on the Kent and Sussex coast); this finally gave it authority over the whole of the UK coastline.

In the 1850s, with smuggling on the wane, oversight of the Coast Guard was transferred from the Board of Customs to the Admiralty. In the decades that followed, the Coast Guard (or Coastguard, as it came to be called) began to function more like an auxiliary Naval service, a recruitment ground for future naval personnel. Responsibilities for revenue protection were retained, but hands-on rescue

services began to be undertaken more and more by Volunteer Life Brigades and by the lifeboats of the RNLI, with the Coast Guard acting in a support role.

By the start of the twentieth century, there was a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the service expressed both by the Board of Customs (concerned for revenue protection) and by the Board of Trade (responsible for safety at sea). In the wake of the First World War, moves were made to address these deficiencies. In 1923 the Coastguard was re-established as a coastal safety and rescue service, overseen by the Board of Trade. Its skills in maritime communication (acquired during the Admiralty years, when Coastguard officers often manned signal stations) were recognized, with provision being made for the use of new communication technologies for safety at sea. There was also a renewed determination to recruit, train and co-ordinate volunteer rescue personnel with the establishment in 1931 of a Coastal Life-saving Corps, later renamed the Coastguard Auxiliary Service (see Coastguard Rescue Service, below).

For the rest of the twentieth century, the Coastguard continued to operate primarily out of local shore stations (use of ships had declined after 1923). In 1931 in England there were 193 stations and 339 auxiliary stations; in 1974 there were still 127 stations (permanently manned) and 245 auxiliary stations. From the 1960s onwards, though, priorities were changing from maintaining coastal lookouts to provision of co-ordinated search and rescue services. Old watch houses, with their on-site accommodation and annexed boathouses, gave way to new technology-based Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres, far fewer in number. Efficiency drives in the 1990s made Her Majesty's Coastguard a government executive agency, then in 1998 the Marine Safety Agency and the Coastguard Agency were joined to become the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

The Coastguard Rescue Service

The Coastguard Rescue Service is made up of 352 teams located near the coast in stations around the UK. The teams are made up of Coastguard Rescue Officers (CROs) who are volunteers trained to carry out rescues and provide assistance to those in distress on the UK's coastline. There are approximately 3500 CROs and they carry out rope rescue, mud rescue, water rescue and search duties in all weathers and at all times. The teams are paged by the National Maritime Operations Centre (NMOC) or Coastguard Operations Centres (CGOC) and respond to emergencies. They also assist other authorities such as the Police, Fire and Ambulance with their specialist expertise. The Coastguard Rescue Teams (CRT) will also provide safety advice to those they rescue and members of the public.

After recovering any casualty the CRTs will provide the assistance needed then will transfer them to a place of safety. The teams will also provide support to the lifeboats and SAR helicopters per tasking by the Operations Centres.

Search and rescue

The Coastguard Rescue teams carry out searches of the shoreline in their patch which, depending on the team's location, could be urban or remote cliff. The searches could be for vessels, wreckage, people who have abandoned ship, or missing persons. This is referred to as Lost and Missing Persons Search (L&MPS).

Water safety and rescue

Due to the nature of the work carried out by CROs they are trained to be safe when in or near the water. They are trained to be able to carry out rescues in extremely rough conditions and the team will work together to recover the casualty from danger while ensuring that each team member is safe.

The training the CRT have will depend on the location of the CRT. All teams are trained in land search methods, water rescue and First Aid.

Mud rescue

Mud rescue is described as the most physically demanding type of rescue there is. Mud rescue technicians walk on the mud using equipment to prevent them getting stuck, and recover casualties. In most cases these are people who have become too tired to continue walking on the mud while taking a shortcut. The CRTs also have rescue equipment to extract people deeply stuck in mud, including inflatable rescue walkways, mud lances, and specialist footwear inspired by ducks' feet.

Rope rescue

Rope rescue methods are to recover casualties who have fallen or are stuck on cliffs. The teams work together to lower a cliff rescue technician who will assess the casualty, provide first aid treatment if necessary and then recover the casualty to the top of the cliff, before transferring the casualty to the next level of care as required.

Role and responsibilities

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) is an executive agency responsible throughout Britain for implementing the Government's maritime safety policy. That includes initiating and co-ordinating search and rescue at sea or on the coast through Her Majesty's Coastguard, checking that ships meet British and international safety rules and preventing coastal pollution.

Typical emergencies to which the Coastguard is summoned include:

- Persons in difficulties in the water;
- Persons in difficulties on the coastline;
- Pleasure craft with problems;
- Medical emergencies on vessels, installations or offshore islands;
- Incidents involving oil installations;
- Persons threatening or attempting suicide on the coast or bridges over estuaries;
- Missing persons on the coast;
- Merchant vessels with problems;
- Evacuating injured or ill persons at sea;
- Groundings;
- Collisions at sea;
- Reports of suspected Ordnance.

Ships in distress or the public reporting an accident should make a Mayday call on MF radio, marine VHF radio channel 16, or by dialling 999 or 112 on a telephone. The Coastguard CGOCs continuously monitor all the maritime distress frequencies (including the international VHF distress frequency 156.8 MHz) and have access to satellite based monitoring systems. The Coastguard CGOC then co-ordinates the emergency response. This normally involves requesting the launch of a local RNLI lifeboat (the RNLI being an independent organization), launching an independent lifeboat, deploying a local Coastguard Rescue Team, or a Search and Rescue helicopter, making broadcasts and requesting assistance from vessels in the area. Depending on the circumstances of each incident, the Coastguard CGOC may also request for other emergency services to be deployed to the incident or to meet other units returning from the incident, for example in the case of a medical emergency. A list of common 'Declared Assets' is below:

HM Coastguard's own CRO (Coastguard Rescue Officers) Initial Response and Coastguard Rescue Teams;

Inshore lifeboats, all-weather lifeboats and inshore rescue hovercraft operated by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Other nominated inshore rescue services

Search and rescue helicopters under contract to the MCA

Ministry of Defence Helicopters and fixed wing aircraft operated by the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Navy (RN)

Emergency towing vessels (ETV) – powerful tugs contracted to the MCA

Nominated Fire Service teams for cliff and mud rescue as well as firefighting and chemical incident response for vessels at sea

Nominated beach lifeguard units

Declared Assets are facilities that have given a declaration to the Coastguard of a certain level of availability or training. Other assets that may be tasked to assist with any incident include; Mountain Rescue, Military Police, The Fire and Rescue Service and volunteer lifeguards. In addition, various 'Memorandums of Understanding' exist between the Coastguard and other emergency services to establish priority when working in each other's areas. For example, police officers needing to carry out a search of the shoreline.

The Coastguard has ten rescue helicopters based around the United Kingdom (at Stornoway Airport, Sumburgh Airport, Prestwick, Inverness Airport, Caernarfon Airport, Humberside, St Athan, Lydd, Newquay Airport, Lee-on-Solent).

Operations

When HM Coastguard receive a distress call by a 999 or 112 phone call, by radio or any other means at the Coastguard Operations Centre (CGOC), a Maritime or Senior Maritime Operations Officer will use their training to question the caller to determine the location. The Maritime Operations Officer will normally be able to confirm the location given by the caller if the call is on the 999 system as the equipment in the Operations room will display where it has come from. The use of the equipment is very important because when people are in a distress situation it is easy for them to make mistakes as they may be frightened, anxious and/or uncertain.

The Maritime Operations Officer will use the correct chart or map for the area and they are trained to ask questions that will help the caller identify where they are. The coastguard SMC (SAR Mission Co-ordinator) in charge of the watch will then decide which rescue resources will be used to conduct the SAR operation. The Maritime Operations Officer who takes the call may keep talking to the caller, while another can be passing information to the chosen rescue resources. These assets will depend on the situation, but could be one of the 365 Coastguard Rescue Teams (CRT) around the UK coast made up of 3,500 Coastguard Rescue Officers, RNLI or independent lifeboats, Search and Rescue Helicopters or a vessel or aircraft known to be in the vicinity or who responds to a broadcast on radio made by the CGOC.

The CGOC will call out and send the rescue units according to the nature and severity of the incident. The CGOC will then co-ordinate the SAR operation using the Coastguard Rescue Teams, lifeboats and helicopters or other vessels or aircraft, who carry out the physical rescue.

Coastguard Rescue Teams have an Officer in Charge who is responsible for the action of that team or unit. If the caller is, for example, stuck in mud, the CRT Officer in Charge (OIC) will coordinate which of the team goes onto the mud to carry out the rescue. If it is someone stuck on a cliff the OIC will coordinate who is lowered over the cliff. All this is done while keeping the CGOC updated of their actions, and possibly being supported by lifeboats or a rescue helicopter. Each rescue resource is

able to relay information about any casualty to each other and to the CGOC who retains overall coordination. The coxswain of a lifeboats and the SAR helicopter pilot would be in command of that rescue asset, whilst being coordinated by the CGOC.

The rescue resources work together with the CGOC as the coordinating authority to carry out SAR response. Once the person(s) in danger are rescued the person is then given the assistance they need and then transferred to a place of safety.

Locations

HM Coastguard co-ordinates activities from 10 Coastguard Operations Centres (CGOCs) and one National Maritime Operations Centre (NMOC):

Aberdeen

Belfast

Shetland

Stornoway

Falmouth

Holyhead

Milford Haven

Dover

Humber (Bridlington)

London

National Maritime Operations Centre at Fareham

All centres operate 24 hours a day. In addition to the operations centres, Coastguard Rescue Teams are based locally at over 300 locations around the UK

Recent Changes

The modernisation of HM Coastguard was completed on the 31st of December 2015. This has seen a significant reduction in operation centres (then called MRCCs). The following Centres have had operational capability transferred to newly named Coastguard Operations Centres (CGOCs) with oversight from the NMOC:

Clyde (closed, area transferred to Stornoway and Belfast)

Forth (closed, area transferred to Aberdeen)

Brixham (closed, area transferred to Falmouth and NMOC)

Portland (closed September 2014, area transferred to NMOC)

Solent (closed September 2014, area transferred to NMOC)

Great Yarmouth (closed, area transferred to Humber)

Liverpool (closed, area transferred to Holyhead)

Swansea (closed, area transferred to Milford Haven)

Thames (closed, area transferred to Dover)

As well as its own operations as described above the NMOC has operation oversight across the rest of the national network at the remaining Centres. In addition the small London coastguard centre, which is annexed to the Port of London Authority headquarters, will maintain its oversight of activity on the River Thames.

Equipment

Boats

As of 2014, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency operates a number of Pacific 32 rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs) stationed at various locations around the United Kingdom.

Aircraft

Under a 10-year £1.6 billion contract starting in 2015, Bristow Helicopters assume responsibility for search and rescue operations within the United Kingdom on behalf of HM Coastguard. Under the contract, 22 Sikorsky S-92 and AgustaWestland AW189 helicopters will operate from 10 locations around the British Isles. Ten S-92s will be based, two per site, at Stornoway and Sumburgh, and at new bases at Newquay, Caernarfon and Humberside airports. Ten AW189s will operate, two per site, from Lee-on-the-Solent and a new hangar at Prestwick airport, and new bases which will be established at St Athan and Inverness airports. All bases will be operational 24 hours a day, and half of the new fleet will be built in Yeovil, Somerset.

Currently, due to procurement issues, UK SAR makes use of smaller AW139 aircraft instead of the AW189s originally specified in the contract, but this is expected to be remedied soon.

Fixed wing (operated by RVL Group under contract)

Cessna 404 - pollution patrol, surveillance, search and rescue

Reims-Cessna F406 - pollution patrol, surveillance, search and rescue

Cessna 310 - pollution patrol, surveillance, search and rescue

Cessna 402 - pollution patrol, surveillance, search and rescue

Helicopters (operated by Bristow under contract)

12 Sikorsky S-92 - search and rescue

10 AgustaWestland AW139 - search and rescue

3 or more AgustaWestland AW189 - search and rescue

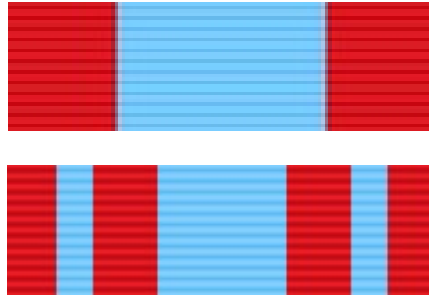
Communications

A variety of communication platforms are used depending on the individual asset and situation. Communication involving Coastguard Rescue Teams, inshore lifeboats (operated by the RNLI), other nominated inshore rescue teams and SAR air assets (both MOD and MCA) typically take place over VHF marine radio. Communication between normal vessels and HM Coastguard/Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres can take place over VHF radio, MF radio and telephone (Satellite, Landline and Mobile).

Rank structure of Her Majesty's Coastguard

HM Coastguard Maritime Operations	Rank	Chief Coastguard	Principal Officer	Maritime Commander	Maritime Controller	Maritime Operations Specialist	Senior Maritime Operations Officer	Maritime Operations Officer	Maritime Operations Officer (Trainee)			
	Insignia											
HM Coastguard Coastal Operations	Rank			Coastal Divisional Commander	Coastal Area Commander	Senior Coastal Operations Officer				Station Officer (Voluntary)	Deputy Station Officer (Voluntary)	Rescue Officer (Voluntary)
	Insignia											

Coastguard Auxiliary Long Service Medal
H.M. Coastguard Long Service and Good Conduct Medal



H.M. Coastguard Long Service and Good Conduct Medal is a long service medal awarded by the United Kingdom. Awarded for twenty years of full or part-time service, members of Her Majesty's Coastguard, Coastguard Rescue Service, and Isle of Man Coastguard and auxiliary coastguards are eligible for the medal.

History

Established in 1911 by the Board of Trade, the medal was initially known as the Board of Trade Rocket Apparatus Long Service Medal first appearing in the order of wear in 1922. The medal was awarded for service with a rocket life-saving apparatus company or brigade, upon the recommendation of the Board of Trade, the Minister of Shipping, Minister of War Transport, or Minister of Transport. In 1954, the name of the medal changed to the Coast Life Saving Corps Long Service Medal. The name of the medal changed again in 1997 to the Coastguard Auxiliary Long Service Medal. Finally, in 2012 the medal came to be known by its current name H.M. Coastguard Long Service and Good Conduct Medal

Appearance

H.M. Coastguard Long Service and Good Conduct Medal is a silver circular shaped medal. The obverse bears the Effigy of The Sovereign surrounded by the Royal Title. Below the effigy are the words Instituted 1911. On the reverse is the inscription Presented to, with a space for engraving the recipient's name, and for long service and good conduct with H. M. Coastguard.

The medal has used two different ribbons with the same colours. The current ribbon is red with centre stripe of sky blue. The red edges are divided by a thin stripe of sky blue as well. The previous version of the ribbon, before 2012 was red at the edges with a broad centre stripe of sky blue. The ribbon is 1.25 inches wide.