



LIVEX Exercise '09

Introduction and summary

16 May 2009



1. Introduction

Background for LIVEX '09

The North Sea is one of the world's busiest seas in terms of shipping traffic. Approximately 250,000 ship movements take place off the Dutch coast every year. Slightly fewer than half of these ships visit a Dutch port of call, including the passenger vessels that offer connections to Great Britain.

The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) states that passenger ships travelling along fixed routes must have a contingency plan on board detailing procedures for cooperation with the relevant SAR organisation in the event of an incident: the *SAR cooperation plan*. The plan stipulates that regular exercises should be held with the parties involved.

As part of the fulfilment of those requirements, LIVEX'09 took place on Saturday, 16 May 2009. DFDS Seaways provided access to its ship for a number of hours during regular service. It was the first time that such an exercise had taken place at sea in the Netherlands.

In this large-scale, multi-agency exercise, a high number of passengers were evacuated from the DFDS Seaways cruise ferry by SAR helicopters and the Royal Netherlands Sea Rescue Organization (KNRM), coordinated by the Netherlands Coast Guard. The passengers were taken to the Volendamkade quay in IJmuiden (at the IJmuiden seaport), where they were received by emergency aid services from the Kennemerland Safety Region for first aid, transport to a reception site and registration.

Preparations for the LIVEX'09 exercise started on 8 May 2008. A steering group was assembled, headed by the Netherlands Coast Guard and including representatives from the Kennemerland Safety Region, the KNRM and the Port of Amsterdam. In September 2008, the kick-off took place for the working groups on land, sea, logistics and communication. The working groups included representatives from both participating organisations and support organisations, such as the IJmuiden Seaport, KVSA/Felison Terminal and OOV-Support (which provided the passengers). The working groups focused their attention on the scenario, the associated safety and security plans, the communication plan and the logistical arrangements. The working group on logistics played an extremely important role in preparation and implementation. Extra support for the set-up and execution of the evaluation was provided by the Veiligheidsbureau in the form of external expertise. Their support was highly valuable and proved educational in drawing up the evaluation plan and carrying out the evaluation.

Conclusions and recommendations from this report will be used to improve planning and procedures and to increase professionalism in multi-agency cooperation in the event of a large-scale evacuation by sea.

2. Summary

Introduction

This summary offers a brief description of the purpose and aims of the exercise and the results that were achieved. It also summarises the recommendations.

Purpose of the exercise

It is the first time that the Kennemerland Safety Region and the maritime organisations of the Netherlands Coast Guard, the Royal Netherlands Sea Rescue Organization (KNRM), DFDS and the Port of Amsterdam have cooperated on an exercise involving the evacuation of a large number of passengers from a ship at sea. This means that the exercise is primarily for orientation purposes. The exercise is intended to increase awareness: what does such a scenario mean for cooperation between land and sea organisations within the teams and between the teams, and what follow-up should be arranged for this exercise?

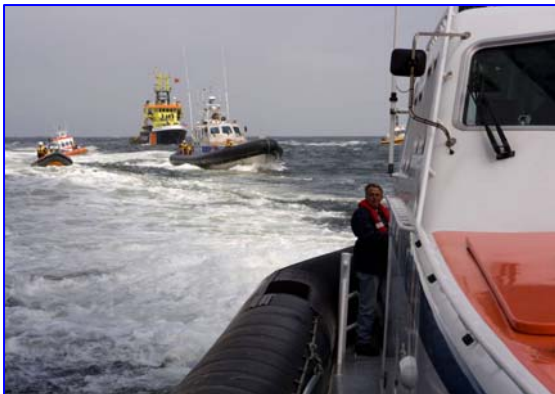
Aims and intended result

The main aim of the LIVEX'09 exercise was: “multi-agency cooperation between the various land and sea organisations in the event of an incident involving a passenger ship on the North Sea which leads to evacuation at sea”.

Secondary aims were:

- To evacuate approximately 400 people using lifeboats and bring them ashore within three hours;
- To rescue 50 people from life rafts and bring them ashore within three hours;
- To hoist 50 people using a helicopter and bring them ashore within three hours.

The intended result of the exercise was to draw up an overview of areas for attention that are relevant to multi-agency cooperation in an evacuation at sea. These areas for attention help to reveal policy priorities (places where planning and procedures need to be improved) and teaching and exercise priorities that are relevant to further professionalization. It can be expected that the exercise as such will already strengthen multi-agency cooperation.



Conclusions

We can state that the main aim was achieved. Evaluation of the exercise led to an overview of terms and conditions for successful multi-agency cooperation, which have been translated into recommendations for planning, professionalization and facilities. The results are set out in this report.

A number of key conclusions can be drawn from the monodisciplinary and multi-agency evaluations, the follow-up discussions and individual impressions. These conclusions were drawn based on where the teams indicated that conditions for successful cooperation were in place or were lacking during the exercise. Categorised according to the four basic requirements for crisis management, it concerns the following items:

Report and Alarm:

- It is extremely important for the Netherlands Coast Guard Centre (KWC) to pass the first report on to the Safety Region quickly and clearly, so land-side emergency aid can be organised in good time and at a scale appropriate to the incident. The Coast Guard Centre and the control centre for the Safety Region need to notify each other of the units that are being deployed, for the purpose of a shared understanding of the situation.

Scaling Up:

- Clear communication between organisations on land and at sea is needed to determine how to scale up the emergency response. This ensures that everyone knows which situation the others are in.

Leadership and Coordination:

- It is necessary for everyone to know what the others are doing, for contact times to be coordinated, and for communications to be kept short and to the point;
- It is important for there to be proper representation in the various teams (CoPI, (regional) Operational Team, (regional) policy team, KWC operational team and the RBN) in the form of liaisons from the land and sea organisations involved. This pools the necessary knowledge from various levels and makes coordination easier;
- When large numbers of people come ashore from the sea, effective coordination is needed between organisations on land and at sea; for example, it is crucial to receive and register the people properly to check whether the passenger and crew manifests correspond to the number of people that came ashore. Clear agreements need to be made as to who keeps track of the people who are evacuated by various means. The Coast Guard Centre needs to be able to maintain an overview of that process.

Information management:

- It is important that the organisations know how each other's lines of contact run (through sitreps, through liaisons or by direct contact) to prevent people from missing information.

The secondary aims, to evacuate the passengers by lifeboat and helicopter, bring them ashore within three hours and hand them over to the authorities, were not achieved in full because the exercise command team decided in mutual consultation with the Medical First Responders for Accidents and Disasters (GHOR) to stop evacuating the simulated casualties from the ship at 2:15 pm local time, for safety reasons.

Quality of the exercise

The quality of the exercise itself was also subjected to evaluation. The quality of the exercise was assessed at a fairly high level. On a scale from 1 to 10, participants gave an average score of 7.6, observers gave a 7.9 and the exercise staff gave an 8.2..

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation, recommendations were made for the four main processes: Report and Alarm, Scaling Up, Leadership and Coordination, and Information Management. These recommendations were then grouped into the categories of professionalization, planning, facilities and structure of the exercise, then expressed in terms of actions to be taken.

