



IHB File No. S3/6003

CIRCULAR LETTER 73/2012
20 July 2012

IHO RESPONSE TO DISASTERS

Reference: Decision 14 of the XVIII IHC - Resolution 1/2005 as amended.

Dear Hydrographer,

1 The IHB would like to remind Member States that the XVIIIth International Hydrographic Conference agreed to amend Resolution 1/2005 as amended - *IHO Response to Disasters*, Section 1 - *Introduction* and Section 2 a) - *Procedures and Guidelines by Coastal States* in accordance with the text in PRO 1 submitted by Japan (Section 2 b) and c) do not change). At the same time the Conference tasked the IHB to circulate an improved edited text to Member States by Circular Letter for any comment prior to its publication in M-3.

2 Please find attached the improved edited text prepared by the IHB for the "Introduction" and the "Procedures and Guidelines by Coastal States".

3 Member States are kindly requested to provide comments, if any, to the IHB **by 20 August 2012, at the latest**. On that date the IHB plans to update Resolution 1/2005 in the publication M-3.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

Captain Hugo GORZIGLIA
Director

Annex: Edited text of "Introduction" and the "Procedures and Guidelines by Coastal States".

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1 Introduction

The 2004 and 2011 Indian Ocean and Japan tsunami not only severely affected local communities through the widespread loss of life and the extensive destruction of most facilities, but also severely affected safety of navigation through the destruction of port facilities and the creation of new navigational obstacles. A huge number of refugees were created and immediately suffered from shortages of food, water and fuel. In such circumstances support by sea transport was vital and depended on the immediate restoration of appropriate hydrographic and charting services. Hydrographic Offices should therefore plan to respond immediately after the occurrence of such severe disasters.

The International Hydrographic Organization, its Member States and the Regional Hydrographic Commissions should ensure that appropriate procedures and guidelines are in place so as to enable an immediate and appropriate response to any future disaster affecting coastal areas of the world.

These procedures should provide guidance to be followed at the national, regional and international levels within the over-arching structure of the IHO.

Such procedures and guidelines should aim to:

- ensure the immediate assessment of damage and its effect on the safety of navigation of national and international shipping,
- immediately inform mariners and other interested parties of relevant damage and any dangers, particularly with respect to navigational hazards,
- re-establish the basic key maritime transportation routes, and
- ensure that charts and other hydrographic information of affected areas are updated as soon as possible.

The procedures and guidelines should identify the type of actions required and the likely support needed to recover from the damage.

Appropriate global or regional action can be co-ordinated through the IHB, in co-operation with the relevant Regional Hydrographic Commissions, Member States, other Coastal States and relevant International Organizations, as appropriate.

It is also very important for Coastal States to collect relevant coastal and bathymetric data in their areas of responsibility and to make this available to the appropriate organizations to support the establishment and improvement of tsunami early warning systems, protection of coastal areas and relevant simulation studies. Any necessary regional cooperation for the collection of shallow and deep-water bathymetry can be coordinated through the IHB in cooperation with other States in the Region and International Organizations as appropriate.

2 Procedures and Guidelines

a) By Coastal States:

All Coastal States should have contingency plans developed in advance in order to be prepared in case a disaster occurs. After the occurrence of a disaster affecting coastal areas under its jurisdiction, each State should promulgate Maritime Safety Information and conduct a preliminary survey to confirm the principal transportation routes, according to the extent of the damage. In response to the reconstruction of ports, each State should undertake hydrographic surveys so as to keep the charts updated. These actions should be coordinated with neighbouring States, Regional Hydrographic Commissions and others as appropriate.

It is important that each Coastal State provides both a senior point of contact and a working point of contact for communication and coordination purposes; this should include the Director of the Hydrographic Service or Maritime Safety Agency or other appropriate persons with the appropriate authority and who are familiar with maritime procedures.

Contingency plans should contain the following key elements:

- i) Immediately upon the occurrence of a disaster, including tsunami, promulgate appropriate navigational warnings and necessary information and advice to shipping through existing channels (NAVTEX, SafetyNET). In addition and following further monitoring and assessment, promulgate updated warnings, information and advice in accordance with the development of the event.
 - ii) Co-operate with the NAVAREA Co-ordinator and other national co-ordinators so that warnings, information and advice can be made available to mariners beyond the area of national jurisdiction as soon as is practicable.
 - iii) Assess the extent of damage to the coastal area particularly to ports, harbours, straits, approaches, and other restricted areas.
 - iv) Assess, in co-operation with other national agencies, for example, lighthouse and port authorities, the extent of damage to navigational aids.
 - v) Prioritize actions and allocate resources in order to identify requirements and undertake preliminary re-surveys starting with the most critical areas for navigation, aiming at ensuring the passage of support and supplies through maritime channels and ports, and the marking of new dangers where necessary.
 - vi) Assess the specific effects on shipping of the existence of obstacles and any changes to the seafloor that can hinder navigation, taking full account of the effects of drifting obstacles which may also hinder preliminary survey results.
 - vii) Inform the Chairman of the Regional Hydrographic Commission and the IHB of the situation, providing details of the damage, actions taken and indicating what support, if any, is needed.
 - viii) Take the following action to assess and define new hydrographic or cartographic requirements, including:
 1. Conducting hydrographic surveys in harbours and approaches as soon as practicable wherever the depth is likely to have changed due to geomorphic change, obstacles, or accumulation of sediment. Surveys should be progressed incrementally in support of progress in reconstruction of port facilities.
 2. Checking and confirming relevant benchmarks. Re-defining chart datum, if necessary.
 3. Providing nautical information as soon as practicable. Providing chart correction information or new editions of charts incrementally according to priorities and available resources. Indicating newly surveyed areas in chart correction information or on new editions of charts in order to highlight areas of more reliable information in areas where significant changes of depth have taken place.
 - ix) Provide follow-up reports to the Chairman of the Regional Hydrographic Commission and the IHB.
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