



PRESS RELEASE

No: 591/2013

Date: 9th August 2013

Ambulance Crews Train for Maritime Rescue

The GHA Ambulance service staff have been undertaking additional training in Maritime Emergencies as part of a ministerial commitment to improve services to those who require emergency retrieval from our coastal waters.

There is a legal requirement for the GHA Ambulance service to provide a maritime emergency service “within reasonable bounds”. Such a service has not previously been provided on a structured and co-ordinated basis by the ambulance service. Instead, it is currently provided on an “incident by incident” volunteer-only basis, which may mean that, in some cases, the service will only be provided once the patient has been landed in Gibraltar. No structured training had previously been available for staff providing this service.

A maritime emergency is defined as a situation which requires the ambulance crew to:

- Attend an incident which has occurred on board a ship involving one or more casualties which is within British Gibraltar Territorial Waters and not berthed in the Port or marinas.
- Be taken by launch to the actual ship where the incident has occurred.
- Disembark from the launch to the ship and vice versa.
- To treat and immobilise the patient on board the ship.
- Disembark the patient from the ship to launch and from launch to shore with the help of the attending authorities.

A questionnaire was recently used to survey EMT staff to establish who would be interested in providing this service. Sixteen of the eighteen respondents said they would wish to be involved in this service, subject to receiving the necessary training. As a consequence, these staff are now being trained with

a view to commencing the service once the training is completed by the end of August.

The training is being carried out by the Port Authority and an expert in the field, with Sigurd Haviland and Mikey Valarino from the Ambulance service involved in the planning of what is a very robust programme. It will now be mandatory for all staff volunteering to undertake this training which consists of the following modules and basic sea safety/survival:

- Health and safety issues on board vessels (this will be provided by the Port Authority's Health and Safety Officer)
- Ship recognition and hazards
- Ship orientation
- Personal protective/safety equipment
- Embarking/disembarking from launch to ship and vice versa
- Handling the immobilised patient on board a ship
- Disembarking the patient from ship to launch and from launch to shore

Maritime emergency crews will also require regular update training, which will be arranged in due course.

Minister for Health, Dr John Cortes said; "I am delighted that so many of our Ambulance Service Personnel have volunteered to agree to this extension to their existing duties. It is another example of their professionalism and commitment. I am also grateful to the Port Authority and the staff within our service for having organised an excellent training programme. This initiative will enhance the service that Gibraltar provides as a Port and add an essential element of safety to the Port's activities."