



IHB File No. S3/0123

CIRCULAR LETTER 59/2005
31 May 2005

TSUNAMI DISASTER IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Reference: A) CL 43/2005 dated 26 April 2005
B) CL11/2005 dated 21 January 2005

Dear Hydrographer,

1. Following on from the Special Session on the Tsunami Disaster in the Indian Ocean held at the Auditorium Rainier III on Saturday 16 April and reported at Reference A) we:

- enclose at Annex A, a revised draft "IHO Response to disasters", which has been amended in accordance with the preliminary comments provided during the discussion at the Special Session. Member States are invited to provide comments on this document by 31 July 2005 prior to its circulation for inclusion in the Resolutions of the IHO.
- inform you that we are maintaining contact with Germany, India and Singapore regarding the maintenance of the Tables showing damage reports, requests for and offers of assistance. Member States will be kept informed of developments and the latest version of the tables is available on the IHO website (www.iho.shom.fr > *Tsunami Disaster Information for the Indian Ocean*).

2. We also inform you that during the recent Maritime Safety Committee Meeting at IMO the opportunity was taken to hold an IMO, IHO, IOC, IALA, WMO coordination meeting in order to exchange information on the actions taken by the Organizations after the meeting held at IMO on 12 January 2005, reported at Reference B), and to update the Action Plan. The IHO reported on the outcome of the EAHC, NIOHC, Special Session meetings and ongoing activities.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. Maratos', written over a horizontal line.

Vice Admiral Alexandros MARATOS
President

Annex A: IHO Response to disasters.

IHO RESPONSE TO DISASTERS

1. Introduction.

In view of the severe hydrographic impact on Safety of Navigation caused by the 2004 tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean and the consequent need for support; the International Hydrographic Organization, its Member States and Regional Hydrographic Commissions need to put in place procedures and guidelines so as to be able to provide an immediate and appropriate response to any future disaster affecting coastal areas of the world. These procedures and guidelines should aim to ensure the immediate assessment of the damage, its affect on National and International shipping and to inform mariners and other interested parties of that damage, particularly with respect to navigational hazards. They should also identify actions required and support needed to recover from the damage. Actions will be co-ordinated by the IHB, in co-operation with the relevant Regional Hydrographic Commission(s), Member State(s) and other International Organizations, as appropriate.

It is emphasised that it is very important for coastal States to collect relevant coastal and bathymetric data in their areas of responsibility and to make these available to the relevant databases in order to be used for 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 will be coordinated by the IHB in cooperation with other States in the Region and International Organizations as appropriate.

The intention is to describe the procedures and provide guidance to be followed, at National, Regional and International level within the structure of the IHO; it is not to establish or operate disaster warning systems and services.

2. Procedures and Guidelines.

a. By Member States.

Each Member State should develop an action plan to be undertaken in the case of a disaster in coastal areas under its jurisdiction. It is very important that each State provides a point of conduct for communication purposes; this should be the Director of the Hydrographic Service or Maritime Safety Agency or other appropriate person familiar with maritime procedures. These plans will contain, as a minimum, the following key elements:

- Assess the extent of damage to the coastal area particularly to ports, harbours, straits, approaches, restricted areas etc.
- Assess, in co-operation with other National Agencies, e.g. Lighthouse Authorities, Port Authorities, the extent of damage to navigational aids
- Undertake preliminary re-surveys, as soon as possible, starting with the navigationally most sensitive areas in order to evaluate the specific effects on shipping and ensure the continuation of support and supplies through maritime channels and ports, marking new dangers where necessary.
- Promulgate warnings and advice to shipping as appropriate through existing channels (NAVTEX, SafetyNet). Co-operate with the NAVAREA Co-ordinator and other National co-ordinators so that this information can be made available to the mariners as soon as possible and beyond the area of national jurisdiction.
- 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.
- Assess and define any new hydrographic / cartographic requirements.
- Provide follow up reports to the Chairman of the Regional Commission and the IHB.

b. By Regional Hydrographic Commissions.

The Chairman of the Regional Hydrographic Commission will be responsible for co-ordinating the actions needed within the Region. In order to achieve this the RHC should develop a 'disaster' action plan, aimed at supporting States in the area to assess the hydrographic damage, provide support and co-ordinate actions and efforts. These plans will be focused on the following:

- Communicating, by the quickest means available, with the focal points of the States in the Region, in order to make an initial evaluation of the extent of the damage.
- Deciding whether a Regional technical task team needs to visit States in the area to support the evaluation of the damage and support needed.
- Deciding, based on the information collected, whether an Extraordinary Meeting of the RHC is needed, in order to discuss in detail the problems, evaluate the damage and respond to requests for support.
- Deciding if the Chairman needs to take a co-ordinating role in assessing damage, providing support and broadcasting information to mariners.
- Informing the IHB on the situation, the actions taken and the need, if any, for external support.
- Monitoring the progress of the actions agreed in the area, keeping Member States in the Region and IHB informed accordingly.
- Including this issue as a permanent Agenda item on RHC meetings in order to monitor the readiness of the Commission to respond to disasters and conducting regular table-top exercises to evaluate the procedures.

c. By the IHB.

The IHB will co-ordinate the actions required of Member States and Regional Hydrographic Commissions in order to assess damage and will co-operate with other International Organizations as appropriate to co-ordinate any external support required. The IHB will undertake the following tasks:

- Communicate with the Member States and Chairmen of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions in order to collect information relating to the scale of the damage, actions taken, the support needed and the desirability of a regional meeting.
- Participate as appropriate in meetings organized by the RHC or Member States, to determine problems and the actions required to remedy the situation
- Co-operate with other International Organizations, informing them of matters affecting the safety of navigation, the needs of Member States, actions taken and seeking where appropriate support from these Organizations for the repair of the damage.
- Invite other International Organizations to participate in Regional Meetings, in order to contribute to the discussions and to the required actions.
- Monitor developments and inform Member States on all issues associated with the damage, actions taken and support needed.
- Investigate the willingness of Member States to provide support and co-ordinate the appropriate actions with the affected States in close co-operation with the Chairman of the RHC.
- Participate in discussions at RHC meetings to monitor requirements, develop responses to possible disasters and test the procedures and readiness to respond by table-top exercises.

3. IHO Disaster Reaction Organization

IHO Disaster Reaction Organisation

