



ANNUAL REPORT 2013

Conversion North Sea Contingency Plan to General Emergency and Intervention Plan (ANIP) for the North Sea

In 2013 the Secretariat Coast Guard, together with all coast guard partners and the National Service for Public Relief (FDOH) continued the process of conversing the North Sea Contingency Plan (ANIP) for the North Sea under coordination of the governor of West-Flanders.

An emergency plan contains different phases according to the severity of the incident. Should the incident extend, a next phase is initiated. The organization, the coordination and the tasks of the various disciplines are described in great detail.

In 2006 the regulation for emergency planning was renewed and a Royal Decree was published in the Belgian Government Gazette (16 February 2006 regarding the emergency and intervention plans).

For the coast guard partners this new regulation was the perfect opportunity to update the somewhat outdated North Sea Contingency Plan and to reprocess it to a General Emergency and Intervention Plan (ANIP) for the North Sea.



The ultimate goal is not only to improve the communication lines, but also to syntonize this plan with other emergency plans on shore. For this purpose, a working group with representatives of all coast guard partners was established. The emergency plan was approved at the meeting of the coast guard policy-making body of March 21st, 2013.



Opendoor ATCC

May 24th 2013 the Air Traffic Control Centre (ATCC) of the ministry of Defence in Semmersake opened its doors. The ATCC ensures the assistance and control of military air traffic and the coordination between civil and military aviation. The Coast Guard Secretariat and Shipping Assistance Division were present at the opendoor.

Cooperation Group on Places of Refuge 2013

In 2013 the European Commission established a working group 'Cooperation Group on Places of Refuge'. The immediate cause was the incident involving MSC Flaminia in 2012, a container carrier where a fire broke out and which consequently had to be towed to a place of refuge. A first meeting took place in Brussels on March 15th 2013. The suggestion was done to organize a number of elaborate table top exercises. A table top exercise is a theoretical exercise in which the participants put down on paper how they would react in real time.

The European Maritime Safety Agency organized an exercise of that kind, named 'Ocean Traveller' on the 25th and 26th November 2013 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The nautical chief of staff of the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) of Shipping Assistance Division, the nautical chief of staff of Pilotage and the federal Coast Guard secretary participated in the exercise. The scenario entailed a collision between a tanker and a container carrier which resulted in oil pollution, fire on board, cargo loss and (fatal) casualties amongst the crew. The exercise was followed by a rigorous debriefing and evaluation of the exercise, and there were also presentations by guest lecturers.

North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum

On 24 and 25 September 2013 the yearly meeting of the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum (NACGF) took place in Lisbon (Portugal). The NACGF was founded in 2007 and is a non-binding, voluntary forum between the coast guard organizations of 20 countries. The main goal is to promote and facilitate cooperation and to exchange information on best practices and experiences.



The director-general of Belgium's government crisis centre, in his function as Coast Guard Chairman, is the head of delegation, accompanied by the Coast Guard Secretary and a representative of the ministry of Defence.

Delegates of both regional and federal coast guard partners participate in the working groups. The Coast Guard Secretariat is the national point of contact for all matters regarding the NACGF.

Every year the NACGF organizes an international exercise, in 2013 it was named Guardex. The nautical head of staff of the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) of Shipping Assistance Division and two delegates of the 40Heli Squadron of Koksijde have followed the entire exercise as observers out of the operational centre in Cascais port.

This exercise was mainly focused on the maritime aspects of the battle against drug trafficking, people trafficking and illegal immigration, protecting human lives at sea and the combating of marine pollution. An Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) exercise was staged in Cascais port. The Very Shallow Water (VSW) team of the Belgian navy took part with the vessel Remus, together with a diving unit of the Portuguese navy and Porto university with a prototype AUV.

The international cooperation and exchange of information proved very useful to all parties concerned.

Bonnex exercise 16 May 2013

On Thursday May 16th a pollution-combating exercise 'Bonnex' took place off the coast of Duinkerke. In the framework of the Bonn Agreement, every year a pollution-combating exercise is organised, in which different countries take part.

The Bonn Agreement handles the cooperation between all countries surrounding the North Sea for tracking down and combating marine pollution.

Belgium participated to the exercise with the vessel Zeetijger of Vloot (Fleet) and the surveillance aircraft of the MUMM (Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models).



Maritime Spatial Planning

In 2011 the development of a Maritime Spatial Planning (MRP) was initiated. A Maritime Spatial Planning is intended to result in a better planning of the use and the space within Belgian marine areas and to offer more legal security to the sea user. This is of great importance for all coast guard partners. In 2012 a Royal Decree was drawn up in which an advisory committee is appointed and in which the procedure for marine spatial planning is described. The advisory committee consists out of federal and regional governmental departments. In 2013 a draft plan was made up and all coast guard partners were invited to give advice, as well as the general public. All observations have been processed by the office of the minister for the North Sea. The draft plan was approved by the council of ministers on the 20th December 2013. The ultimate goal is to have the maritime spatial plan approved by Royal Decree.

Exercises Drowning persons 2013

Every year the governor of West-Flanders and his services organize rescue exercises along the Belgian coast to test the existing procedures and to adjust them if necessary. The procedures contain the various agreements and modes of cooperation between all emergency services and coast guard partners involved.

The exercises of July 8th in Koksijde and July 24th in Oostende showed that the communication between the various coast guard partners is overall well organized, but some details can still be refined.



That is why in 2013 an extra exercise on September 20th was set up near the mole of Zeebrugge. The scenario had one fishing boat with two passengers getting into trouble. One passenger falls overboard and the remaining passenger gets hurt, but manages to stay aboard and alert the rescue services.

These exercises and the lessons learned from real interventions prove very useful to adjust and refine the procedures for saving drowning persons.

Ports Day 2013



Sunday 22 September 2013 the Flemish Ports Day was organized for the third time. A unique opportunity to discover the hustle and bustle in the Flemish ports of Antwerp, Ghent, Zeebrugge and Ostend.

In the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Ostend employees of the Coast Guard Secretariat, the agency for Maritime Services and Coast (MDK) and Shipping Assistance Division provided the visitors with more information on the coast guard structure and its partners, the agency MDK and the weather forecast for the sea. Furthermore, a thousand visitors took the opportunity to participate in a guided tour of the MRCC.

Polex exercise 2013

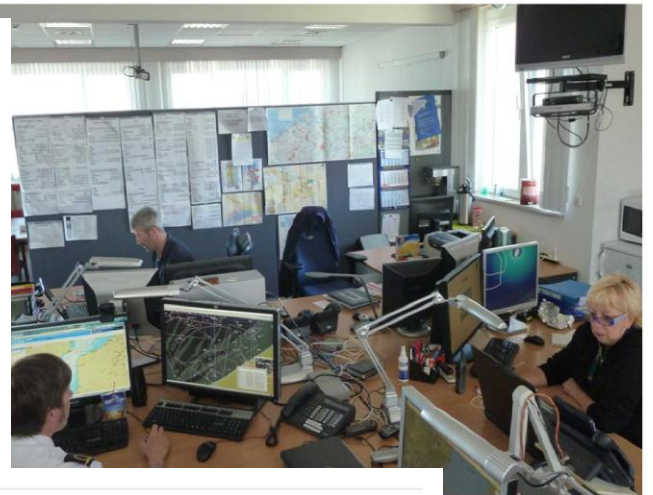
June 25th a Polex exercise was carried out near the windmill farm C-Power. This anti-pollution exercise aimed at testing and training the coordinated deployment of dispersants in and around the windmill farms. Dispersants are chemical products, more in particular, detergents that are specifically used for combating oil at sea.

Different coast guard partners worked together during this exercise: the ministry of Defence, Mumm (Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models), FPS Public Health (DG Environment), Civil Protection, the MRCC (Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre) and the MIK (Maritime Security Centre Belgium). Windmill operator C-Power also took part. The exercise showed some points for improvement but overall good results were booked regarding cooperation and communication.



Safe Shipping Days at sea

The Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) of Shipping Assistance Division, the Directorate-General Maritime Transport and the Maritime and River Police all contributed to the organization of four safe shipping days in April 2013. Teams of the Maritime and River Police and the Shipping Inspectorate informed recreational seafarers on how to navigate safely and carried out preventive inspections on board of several yachts.



Operation Opera 2013

In April 2013 a number of coast guard partners worked together to set up an inspection operation under the codename Opera, already for the fifth year in a row. On April 22nd the Belgian navy vessel Stern and its crew sailed out of Zeebrugge port to support the operation at sea.



Several coast guard partners (Maritime and River Police, FPS Public Health, Sea Fisheries Service) had inspectors on board the Stern to carry out joint inspections on board, each according to their own competences and priorities. Thanks to a good cooperation between the different partners, the operational cooperation could be even further improved.