

**IHO Programme 3 “Inter Regional Coordination and Support”  
3.1 – Regional Hydrographic Commissions**

<b>IHO RESPONSE TO DISASTERS</b>	<b>1/2005 as amended</b>	<b>29/2015</b>	<b>K4.5</b>
----------------------------------	--------------------------	----------------	-------------

## **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, within their area of responsibility, which may vary from Member State to Member State.

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 from Hydrographic Offices needed to recover from the damage.

Appropriate global or regional actions can be co-ordinated through the IHB, in liaison with the relevant Regional Hydrographic Commissions, IHO Member States, other Coastal States and relevant International Organizations, as appropriate to the circumstances, based on the general framework described in section 2 below.

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. In particular, Coastal States should cooperate and support the IOC Tsunami Warning Programme ([www.ioc-tsunami.org](http://www.ioc-tsunami.org)) in setting up sea-level and tide gauges networks, procedures and systems for the exchange and transmission of near real time sea-level data. One to five minute transmission of sea-level data, properly sampled (~1 min rather than 15 min or 1 h) is recommended for specific gauges likely to provide early warnings of tsunamis and storm surges. Any necessary regional cooperation for the collection of data can be coordinated through the Regional Hydrographic Commission<sup>2</sup> with other States in the Region and regional bodies of other International Organizations as appropriate, such as the IOC.

## **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

## **IHO Programme 3 “Inter Regional Coordination and Support”**

### **3.1 – Regional Hydrographic Commissions**

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 could 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 tsunamis, promulgate appropriate navigational warnings and necessary information and advice to shipping through existing channels (e.g. NAVTEX, SafetyNET, etc...). 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 Chair 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 Chair of the Regional Hydrographic Commission and the IHB.

#### b) By Regional Hydrographic Commissions:

The Chair 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:

- i) 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.

**IHO Programme 3 “Inter Regional Coordination and Support”**  
**3.1 – Regional Hydrographic Commissions**

- ii) Deciding whether a Regional technical task team needs to visit States in the area to support the evaluation of the damage and support needed.
  - iii) 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.
  - iv) Deciding if the Chair needs to take a co-ordinating role in assessing damage, providing support and broadcasting information to mariners.
  - v) Informing the IHB on the situation, the actions taken and the need, if any, for external support.
  - vi) Monitoring the progress of the actions agreed in the area, keeping Member States in the Region and IHB informed accordingly.
  - viii) 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:

- i) Communicate with the Chairs of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions and, where necessary, directly with Member States in the region(s) affected, in order to collect information relating to the scale of the damage, actions taken, the support needed and the desirability of a regional meeting.
- ii) Participate as appropriate in meetings organized by the RHC or Member States, to determine problems and the actions required to remedy the situation
- iii) Co-operate with other International Organizations, informing them of matters affecting the safety of navigation, the needs of Member States, and actions taken and seeking where appropriate, support from these Organizations for the repair of the damage.
- iv) Invite other International Organizations to participate in Regional Meetings, in order to contribute to the discussions and to the required actions.
- v) Monitor developments and inform Member States on all issues associated with the damage, actions taken and support needed.
- vi) 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 Chair of the RHC.
- vii) Participate in discussions at RHC meetings to monitor requirements, develop responses to possible disasters and test the procedures and readiness to respond by tabletop exercises.

IHO Programme 3 “Inter Regional Coordination and Support”  
3.1 – Regional Hydrographic Commissions

3 IHO Disaster Reaction Organization

