
The Carriage Of Defibrillators On Ships

Notice to Ship Owners, Ship Operators and Managers, Masters and Officers of Passenger Ships and High Speed Craft and all Seafarers

This notice replaces MGN 101(M) and should be read in conjunction with MSN 1768(M+F).

Summary

The purpose of this Marine Guidance Note is to provide updated guidance on the carriage of defibrillators. It provides advice on risk assessment, for operators of UK passenger ferries and high speed passenger craft to determine whether to carry defibrillators as part of their emergency medical equipment.

1.0 Background

1.1 Defibrillators use electric shocks to restore the rhythm of the heart in the event of certain types of cardiac arrest. Technological advances now mean that they are straightforward to use, relatively low cost and their use requires only basic training. In particular, automated external defibrillators (AEDs) assess the patient's condition and indicate when the shock should be administered. Since they are now widely available in public places on shore there may be an expectation that they are similarly available on board ships.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 In view of the advances in technology since the last Guidance Note was issued, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency now recommends that operators of passenger vessels undertake a risk assessment, with external advice if necessary, to determine if AEDs should be carried. If risk assessment indicates that there is a likelihood of using an AED more than once in five years, operators should consider carrying one as part of their medical equipment. As a general guide, vessels in regular operation carrying in excess of 100 persons, will be those which can be expected to fall within this range, especially if the average age of those carried is high. Operators of other types of ship may also wish to consider carrying defibrillators, based on risk assessment.

2.2 Defibrillators and consumables, where carried, should be tested in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. In addition, first aiders on board ship should receive suitable familiarisation training in the use of AEDs, as well as their training in cardio pulmonary resuscitation. Regular refresher training is also required to ensure that competence is maintained.

3.0 Limitations and Aftercare

3.1 All those who may use defibrillators should be aware that their success rate in terms of lives saved is relatively low.

3.2 Even where a patient's heart rhythm is restored, the patient will remain very ill and may require continuous assistance and support with breathing and other essential functions until arrival at hospital. The patient will therefore need to be transported to hospital as urgently as possible and the master or vessel operator should wherever possible make suitable arrangements for transport to be available on arrival, as soon as the incident has occurred.

4.0 Radio Medical Advice

4.1 Masters and operators are also reminded that, in the event of a medical emergency or incident at sea, radio medical advice is always available. To obtain radio medical advice, contact should first be made with the Coastguard on either MF DSC, VHF DSC, NHF 16 or INMARSAT, who will arrange for immediate connection to a doctor at one of the designated radio medical advice centres ashore.

Further Information

Further information about the contents of this Note may be obtained from:

The Resuscitation Council (UK). www.resus.org.uk

or from the MCA at the address below:

Seafarer Health and Safety Branch
Bay 2/09
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton SO15 1EG

Tel : +44 (0) 23 8032 9249
Fax : +44 (0) 23 8032 9251
e-mail: seafarer.H&S@mcga.gov.uk

General Inquiries: 24 Hour Infoline
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0870 600 6505

MCA Website Address: <http://www.mcga.gov.uk>

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