COAST GUARD
MEMORANDUM
58/09

COAST GUARD UNIT’S
RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS
AND RISK ASSESSMENT

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RISK MANAGEMENT AND RISK ASSESSMENT

PURPOSE: This Instruction standardises the Coast Guard’s Risk Management process for Coast Guard Units and outlines procedures and responsibilities to implement it. The Risk Management process for Coast Guard Units is part of the Coast Guard's Safety Management System.

SCOPE: The application of Risk Management basic concepts is not limited to unit or mission operations. All Coast Guard Unit’s activities and operations require decisions managing risk. In risk management "operational" refers not solely to the dedicated volunteer carrying out the assigned mission, but includes all Coast Guard Unit’s members who contribute to the overall goal of increasing unit effectiveness. All organisational levels contribute either directly or indirectly to operational mission success. Therefore, risk management's target audience includes all those involved in operations, maintenance and support activities. Risk assessment and risk management concepts generally apply to all Coast Guard Unit’s activities and decision-making processes.

PHILOSOPHY: Taking calculated, measured and understood risks is essential for an organisation involved in the activities and missions that the Coast Guard Unit's participate in. The Coast Guard's aim is to increase mission success while reducing, where possible, the risk to personnel, resources and ensuring the environment is at a level acceptable to a particular unit for a given situation.

Risk Management and Risk Assessment aims to give Coast Guard Units consistency and allow volunteers identify risk using a similar disciplined, organised and logical thought process. Risk management provides the framework to minimize risk, show concern for colleagues and maximize the Coast Guard Unit’s mission capabilities. The process’s additional benefits include safeguarding a Coast Guard member’s health and welfare and conserving vital resources and support equipment.

Coast Guard volunteers or team leaders should never feel obliged or pressured to accept a particular risk e.g. - it is more acceptable to seek new strategies to achieve a rescue than to press on in an obvious unacceptable situation. In certain situations the correct approach is to say no!
RISK TERMINOLOGY: Coast Guard member's need to understand risk management terms clearly and communicate risk effectively in order to use the risk management process. Understandably, each Unit and activity will differ in how the risk management system interprets risk assessment and risk management results due to unique mission differences and its members' varying degrees of knowledge, skill, experience and maturity. All personnel shall use these common key terms when communicating risk across program and activity lines.

a) Risk management: A continuous, systematic process of identifying and controlling risks in all activities according to a set of pre-conceived parameters by applying appropriate management policies and procedures. This process includes detecting hazards, assessing risks, and implementing and monitoring risk controls to support effective, risk-based decision-making.

b) Risk: The chance of personal injury, property damage or loss, determined by combining the results of individual evaluations of specific elements that contribute to the majority of risk concerns. Risk generally is a function of severity and probability. The models in this instruction, however, single out exposure as a third risk factor.

c) Severity: An event's potential consequences in terms of degree of damage, injury or impact on a mission.

d) Probability: The likelihood an individual event will occur.

e) Exposure: The amount of time, number of cycles, number of people involved and/or amount of equipment involved in a given event, expressed in time, proximity, volume or repetition.

f) Mishap: An unplanned single or series of events causing death, injury, occupational illness, damage to or loss of equipment or property.

g) Hazard: Any real or potential condition that can endanger a mission; cause personal injury, illness, damage equipment or property or death.

h) Risk Assessment: The systematic process of evaluating various risk levels for specific hazards identified with a particular task or operation.

i) Risk Rating Scale: A scale of specific risk degrees, determined during the risk management process's risk assessment step. Various Coast Guard Units and activities should use the safety industry's standard terms low, medium and high when discussing risk. However, each Unit will define low, medium and high risk in terms meaningful to its own personnel.
CONCEPT - The Risk Management process:

a. Is a decision making tool Coast Guard personnel at all levels use to increase operational effectiveness by anticipating hazards and reducing the potential for loss, thereby increasing the probability of a successful mission.

b. Advocates harnessing input and feedback from all organisational levels to make the most informed decisions possible.

c. Risk decisions must be made at levels of responsibility that correspond to the degree of risk, considering the mission significance and the timeliness of the required decision.

IMPLEMENTATION:

A key objective is to implement the Risk Management process as an integrated aspect of Coast Guard Unit's activities and operations.

Successfully implementing the Risk Management process will create an environment in which every Coast Guard member is motivated to personally manage risk in all they do.

How do I implement Risk Management?

Implementation efforts should correspond to the complexity of the processes and procedures of the various activities targeted. In other words, devise simple implementation plans for simple processes.

Integration plans should target processes, procedures and guidance documents etc affecting activities, such as checklists, operations manuals, standard operating procedures (SOP), training doctrines, pre- and post-deployment briefings, stress-related issues, orientation and indoctrination programs for new personnel, construction plans, refueling and/or maintenance procedures, hazardous materials procedures etc.

Other events that will require a risk assessment would be SAR Demonstrations, Combined Unit Exercises, participation in SAR exercises, participation in media events or other CG promotional events, participation in Boat Shows, Fish Expo’s etc. This list is only a guide and other events should be added as appropriate.
PRINCIPLES: Apply these basic decision-making principles before executing any anticipated job, action or mission. As an operation progresses and evolves, personnel should continuously employ risk management principles during the decision-making process.

a. **Accept No Unnecessary Risk:**

   All Coast Guard Unit’s operations and activities entail risk. Unnecessary risk conveys no commensurate benefit to the safety of a mission. The most logical courses of action for accomplishing a mission are those meeting all mission requirements while exposing personnel and resources to the lowest possible risk.

b. **Accept Necessary Risk When Benefits Outweigh Costs:**

   Compare all identified benefits to all identified costs. The process of weighing risks against opportunities and benefits helps to maximize unit capability. Even high-risk endeavors may be undertaken when decision-makers clearly acknowledge the sum of the benefits exceeds the sum of the costs. Balancing costs and benefits may be a subjective process open to interpretation.

c. **Make Risk Decisions at the Appropriate Level:**

   Depending on the situation, anyone can make a risk decision. However, the appropriate level to make those decisions is that which most effectively allocates the resources to reduce the risk, eliminate the hazard and implement controls. Volunteers at all levels must ensure that they are aware of their own limitations and when they must or should refer a decision to a higher level.

d. **Risk Assessment is a changeable management tool:**

   While the initial risk assessment is critically important in an operation’s planning stages, risk can change dramatically during an actual mission. Therefore, volunteers should remain flexible and integrate risk management i.e. continuous risk assessment in executing existing tasks and new tasks as they arise or are assigned.

e. **Risk Management is a continuous process:**

   Risk management applies to pre, during and post an operation or activity. It is important that having completed a mission that the risk assessments are revisited during the debrief to compare accuracy pre-mission, during and post mission of the risk assessment.
RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

SEVEN-STEP RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS

- Identify Mission Tasks
- Identify Hazards
- Assess Risks
- Identify Options
- Evaluate Risk vs Gain
- Execute Decision
- Monitor Situation

MANAGEMENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. Officers-in-Charge shall;

(1) Manage risk effectively.
(2) Select from risk reduction options developed.
(3) Eliminate ineffective safeguards where possible but not comprise CG SOP’s.
(4) Accept or reject risk based on the benefit derived.
(5) Eliminate barriers to taking acceptable risks where possible
(6) Elevate risk issues to higher authority for resolution when appropriate
(7) Motivate Unit members to use Risk Management and advocate supporting training opportunities.

b. Volunteers shall;

(1) Assess risks, develop risk reduction options and implement additional safeguards as needed.
(2) Eliminate barriers to taking acceptable risks where possible.
(3) Understand, accept and implement risk management processes.
(4) Maintain situational awareness of the changing risks associated with an operation or task and assertively notify supervisors when appropriate.
(5) Not put themselves in danger.
(6) Ask questions if they do not understand something.
(7) Wear and use approved and supplied PPE.
(8) Follow instructions laid down in CG SOP’s.
Step 1: Identify Mission Tasks

Define the Mission or Task: Search and Rescue Mission Controller or Officer in Charge defines the mission task or describes the mission at hand. They will describe what is required to accomplish the tasks and the conditions under which to conduct them. To assist with this step, construct a list or chart depicting the operation's major phases or steps in the process.

Step 2: Identify Hazards

List the hazards associated with each phase of the operation or step in the job process. Potential failures, i.e. things that could go wrong, encompass equipment or operational problems both internal and external to the unit.

The key to successfully analysing risk is to carefully define the hazards and identify and evaluate safeguards. In brainstorming sessions asking the question "What if?" is an excellent tool to help identify all potential hazards. Specific hazard identification is important, since it leads to assessing risk more accurately and subsequently developing risk control options or safeguards more thoroughly.

To assist in hazard identification a Unit could use the "PEACE" model (Planning, Event complexity, Asset selection, Communications and Environmental conditions) will ensure effective hazard identification in each of these three main categories:

- Equipment: Is the equipment functioning properly and will it do so throughout the planned evolution?
- Environment: How will weather, geographic influences, physical barriers, workplace climate and available light affect the event?
- Personnel: Are personnel properly trained and capable of handling the mission's demands? Are they fatigued, complacent or suffering from physical or mental stress?

Step 3: Assess Risks

Assess the Risks: Consider risk applicable to the unit and the mission. Determine individual risk levels for each hazard identified. Assess risk by evaluating specific elements or factors that, when combined, define risk.
GREEN AMBER RED (GAR) RISK ASSESSMENT MODEL

We can address more general risk concerns, involving planning operations or reassessing risks as we reach milestones within our plans, by using the GAR model. The following guidelines can be used in constructing risk assessment – Supervision, Planning, Crew, Environment and Event Complexity

The questions posed in the section below are examples and are not an exhaustive list of questions.

Supervision:

- Is supervision adequate for the mission to be performed?
- Is the supervisor(s) qualified in the mission being tasked?
- Has the supervisor(s) worked closely and effectively with the other team members in the past?
- Supervisory control should consider how qualified a supervisor is and whether he or she actually is supervising. The higher the risk, the more supervision needs to focus on observing and checking. An Officer actively involved in a task (doing something) can be distracted easily and probably is not an effective safety observer in moderate to high risk management.

Planning:

- Preparation and planning should consider how much information is available.
- How clear it is.
- How much time is available to plan the evolution or evaluate the situation.

Crew:

- Are all crewmembers involved in the mission qualified?
- Do the team members selected work well together?
- Are the crewmembers selected for the mission physically, emotionally, and mentally fit?

Environment:

Environment should consider all factors affecting personnel, unit or resource performance, including time of day, lighting, atmospheric and oceanic conditions, chemical hazards and proximity to other external and geographic hazards and barriers, among other factors.

When evaluating the environment it is important to carefully examine how the conditions on scene will affect the performance of your crew. Some factors to consider when evaluating the scene are:
Equipment:

- Do the crewmembers selected have the right equipment for the mission?
- Is the equipment that will be used in the mission in working order?
- Will the equipment work under the conditions on scene?
- Weather conditions.
- What is the sea state, wind, temperature, time of day, visibility, precipitation?
- What effect, if any, will the weather have on the performance of the mission?

Hazards:

- What hazards exist enroute to, on scene and returning?

Event Complexity:

The complexity of the event can affect the time, personnel, and equipment that is required to perform the mission. When evaluating the complexity of the mission, consider the following:

- Event or evolution complexity considers both the time and resources required to conduct an evolution. Generally, the longer the exposure to a hazard, the greater the risks involved. However, each circumstance is unique. For example, more repetitions of an evolution can increase the opportunity for a loss to occur, but on the positive side, may improve the proficiency of the team conducting the evolution, depending on the team's experience, thus possibly decreasing the chance of error.
- Consider how long the environmental conditions will remain stable.
- Consider the precision and level of coordination needed to conduct the evolution.
- The longer it takes to perform the mission, the longer the crew will be exposed to hazards and other conditions that effect performance.
- Is there more than one mission being performed at the same time or does that possibility exist?
- Does the complexity of the mission increase the hazards associated with that mission?

As defined earlier, Risk Assessment is a systematic method of determining the risk that exists to a team or an individual during the performance of a mission. This assessment is based on all the elements of the operational plan.

The method in which we assess the risk is to correlate it to the colour; Green, Amber or Red.
The illustration below defines each level.

Red – Serious risk is present.
Amber – Moderate risk is present.
Green – Minimum risk is present.

Calculating Risk: To compute the total degree of risk for each hazard previously identified, **assign a risk code of 0 for no risk through 10 for maximum risk** to each of the five elements to obtain a personal estimate of the risk. Add the risk scores to come up with a total risk score for each mission or activity within the mission if applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calculation Worksheet</th>
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<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
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<td>Planning/preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mission Complexity</td>
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<td>Total Score</td>
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</tbody>
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**TOTAL SCORE**

Total risk value

1-15 - green zone- the risk is rated Low.
16 – 34 - amber zone –the risk is rated Moderate.
35 –50 - Red zone – the risk is rated Serious.
The GAR model is good to assess an operation or mission generally. If the degree of risk appears unduly high in one or more of the elements above, perform a second assessment in consultation with the SAR Mission Controller.

**Risk Ratings:** The ability to assign numerical values or color codes to risk elements in the GAR model is not the most important part of risk assessment. What is critical in this risk management step is team discussion to understand the risks and how the team will manage them.

Different Coast Guard operational Units may interpret green, amber and red differently for their own missions and operators. Understanding these differences will improve communications among Units. However, a low/medium/high scale is generally understood throughout the Coast Guard and is the safety industry’s widely used standard.

Therefore, discussions of risk among various Coast Guard activities will use the terms low, medium and high, but each operational Unit will define those terms meaningfully for its own volunteers.

**GREEN**

Minimum risk is present for the mission that is being performed. All elements of the plan reflect that conditions are at or near optimum safety levels to complete the mission.

**Example:** Your unit on a regular basis performs the mission. The tasks are known. The crew is well supervised, qualified and is physically and mentally ready. The equipment is operating properly. You have fair weather and minimal hazards. The mission is complex enough to keep the unit operating at its most efficient level.

**AMBER**

Moderate risk is present for the mission being performed. Elements of the plan reflect that conditions are at less than optimum safety levels to complete the mission.

**Example:** The mission is one that your unit performs on a regular basis. The tasks are known. The crew is well supervised and qualified. However, the crew is physically fatigued. The equipment is operating properly. You have fair to poor weather conditions and there are some navigational hazards. The mission is complex, with minimal hazards on scene.
**RED**

Serious risk is present for the mission being performed. Elements of the plan reflect that conditions are the worst-case scenario. The ability of the unit to complete the mission is seriously challenged.

**Example:** The mission is not one that your unit performs on a regular basis, but the task(s) are known. The crew is well supervised and qualified. However, the crew is physically and mentally fatigued. Some equipment is not operating properly. The weather conditions are poor and there are navigational hazards. The mission is complex with significant hazards present.

Assessing the risk in each definition of Green, Amber and Red levels of risk, the Risk example is intentionally written to be generic. This has been done so that a volunteer can apply the example to a real mission that they perform with their Unit.

*Once you have assessed and determined the level of risk, you must communicate your assessment to your mission supervisor – ensure that Unit’s Officer in Charge and SAR Mission Controller at MRCC or MRSC are informed of your risk assessment.*

*This is an extremely important step in the Risk Management process.*

Your assessment may provide valuable insight that is not available to the SAR Mission Controller or involved personnel.
**Step 4 Identify Options**

**PLANNING:** Preparation and planning should consider how much information is available, how clear it is and how much time is available to plan the evolution or evaluate the situation.

**Identify the Options:** Starting with the highest risk hazards assessed in Step 3, identify as many risk control options or safeguards as possible for all hazards exceeding an acceptable degree of risk. Determine each option’s impact on mission and unit goals and select the perceived best alternative or combination of alternatives. Mission priority and time criticality often drive option choice.

**Risk control options include:** Spread out, Transfer, Avoid, Accept and Reduce (STAAR).

**Spread Out:** increasing either the exposure distance or the time between exposures commonly spreads risk out.

**Transfer:** Transferring risk does not change probability or severity but rather shifts possible losses or costs to another entity.

**Avoid:** Avoiding risk altogether requires canceling or delaying the job, mission or operation, but this option is rarely exercised due to mission importance. However, it may be possible to avoid specific risks, e.g. avoid risks associated with a night operation by planning the operation for daytime.

**Accept:** Accept risk when the benefits clearly outweigh the costs, but only as much as necessary to accomplish the mission or task.

**Reduce:** Risk can be reduced. The overall goal of risk management is to plan missions or design systems that do not contain hazards. However, the nature of more complex operations that the Coast Guard Unit’s perform makes it impossible or impractical to design them completely hazard-free.

**Risk Assessment Solutions**

As a Unit analyse hazards, identify those requiring resolution. To be effective, risk management strategies must address risk's components: severity, probability and exposure.

Using protective devices, engineering controls and personal protective equipment usually helps control severity.

Training, situational awareness, attitude change, rests and stress reduction usually helps control probability.

Reducing the number of people involved or the number of events, cycles or evolutions usually helps control exposure.
**Step 5 Evaluate Risk V Gain**

**Rule 1 Never accept High Risk for Low Gains**

**Rule 2 Never accept High Risk for Low Gains**

**Rule 3 Never accept High Risk for Low Gains**

**Risk vs. Gain:** Analyse the operation's degree of risk with the proposed controls in place. Determine whether the operation's benefits now exceed the degree of risk the operation presents. Be sure to consider the cumulative risk of all identified hazards and the decision's long-term consequences.

This step also serves as a reality check to verify the objective still is valid. If the risk's costs outweigh the benefits, re-examine the control options to learn whether any new or modified controls are available. If not, inform the next level in the chain of command the mission's risk, based on the evaluation, exceeds the benefits and should be modified.

If the mission's benefits outweigh the risks, with controls in place determine if the current level in the chain of command can implement all the controls. If not, find assistance from the next level in the chain of command. When notified of a situation where risk outweighs benefit, the next level in the chain of command should assist with implementing required controls, modify or cancel the mission or accept the identified risks.

**Step 6 Execute decision**

Once the risk control decision is made, assets must be made available to implement the specific controls. Part of implementing control measures is informing the personnel in the system of the risk management process results and subsequent decisions. If personnel disagree, the decision-makers should explain the decision rationally. Carefully documenting the decision and all steps in the process, usually done only for deliberate or strategic operational risk management applications, facilitates communications and clarifies the rational process behind risk management decisions.

**Step 7 Monitor the Mission or Situation**

- Monitor the situation to ensure the controls are effective and remain in place.

- Identify changes requiring further risk management and act on them.

- Take action when necessary to correct ineffective risk controls and reinitiate the risk management steps in response to new taskings, situations or hazards.
It is important to remember

RISK MANAGEMENT IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS.

Failure to respond to changes in the situation can become a link in a chain of errors that leads to a mishap.
## Quick reference guide

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<th>Medium Risk</th>
<th>High Risk</th>
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<td><strong>High Gain</strong></td>
<td>Accept the Mission.</td>
<td>Accept the Mission only with Command endorsement.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continue to monitor Risk Factors.</td>
<td>Actively pursue Control Options to reduce Risk.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Medium Gain</strong></td>
<td>Accept the Mission.</td>
<td>Accept the Mission only with Command endorsement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to monitor Risk Factors.</td>
<td>Communicate Risk V Gain through Chain of Command.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Actively pursue Control Options to reduce Risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Risk</strong></td>
<td><strong>Do not accept the Mission.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Risk</strong></td>
<td>Accept the Mission.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to monitor Risk Factors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Medium Gain</strong></td>
<td>Accept the Mission.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continue to monitor Risk Factors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low Gain</strong></td>
<td>Accept the Mission.</td>
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<td>Continue to monitor Risk Factors.</td>
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IRISH COAST GUARD RISK MANAGEMENT AND RISK ASSESSMENT MODEL

1. Define the mission

2. Identify the hazards

   What can go wrong? Ask yourself & others in the chain, "What if?"
   Looking at each element of the PEACE model identify all of the hazards. The key to successfully analyzing risk is to carefully define the hazards & identify & evaluate safe guards.

3. Assess the risks

   Risk Calculation Worksheet
   Supervision
   Planning/preparation
   Crew
   Environment
   Mission Complexity
   Total Score

4. Identify the option

   Identify as many risk control options as possible for all possible hazards exceeding an acceptable degree of risk.

5. Evaluate risk vs gain

   Risk outweigh gain? Notify COC to assist, modify or cancel mission or accept identified risks.

6. Execute the mission

   Inform responsible persons of the risk management process results & subsequent decisions.

7. Monitor the situation

   Monitor the situation. Risk management is a continuous process.

GAR RISK ASSESSMENT MODEL

GAR EVALUATION SCALE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Green</th>
<th>Amber</th>
<th>Red</th>
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<td>1-15</td>
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<td>16-34</td>
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<td>35-50</td>
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Green - Low risk
Amber - Moderate risk
Consider procedures/actions to minimize.
Red - High Risk. Implement measures to reduce risk prior to starting mission.
Annex 1

Brief  The brief sets the stage for how the mission will be conducted. It clarifies expectations for team members and establishes the ground rules for the mission. Make the following elements part of your brief:

- Specify desired results.
- Set expectations.
- Clarify information of the plan you’re briefing.
- Accept/encourage input from involved personnel.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Define accountability.

Debriefing  The debrief provides an opportunity to evaluate and recognize teams or individuals for their performance. This includes identifying areas of opportunity where performance can be improved in future operations. Make the following elements part of your debriefing routine.

Conduct self-critique - Have each individual recap their part of the mission and identify what area they think can be improved in the future.

Encourage feedback and input – Implement the suggestions when valid. Recognize the crewmembers contribution.

Focus on key processes – Focus attention on doing the “right things right.” Be prepared to recommend changes in procedure and policy in order to improve the mission(s) the unit performs.