Investigator Training

EMSA is promoting the development of common standards and solutions for investigator training and qualification, and it is also developing and implementing a training plan which enables Member State training authorities to work with the EMCIP system. The main goal is to assist Member States in their efforts to implement best practice in a consistent way.

EMSA attaches much importance to the use of the Voyage Data Recorder (VDR), otherwise known as the 'black box,' and other electronic devices in accident investigation. These provide the possibility of accessing accurate information on the conversations and decisions involving different parties involved in an accident, as well as information on the position, direction, speed of the vessel, etc. Consequently, the main goal of the EMSA training activities is to support the consistent, effective build up of Member State capabilities associated with the retrieval, download and analysis of VDR data.

Looking to the Future

The most important future requirement is for all EU countries with a maritime interest to either have their own independent bodies to investigate accidents, or to have arrangements with other organisations to do so when appropriate. At the present time, only the minority of Member States have such capabilities or support arrangements, so EMSA will continue to play a role in assisting in their set up.

As EMSA is continuously developing and/or improving a growing number of EU maritime databases and systems, the intention is that aspects of EMCIP will progressively become more integrated with the respective elements of other EMSA systems. This may also apply to non-EU systems. For example, the possibility of transferring data directly from EMCIP to the IMO accident database is being explored, in order to avoid Member States having to feed data into both systems in parallel.

Looking to the longer term future, EMSA also participates in projects which will enable it to keep at the forefront of technical developments, and therefore enable it to move forward quickly and to recommend appropriate actions to other Member State accident investigation interests.

Further Information

The EMSA website contains further information on this and all the other activities of the Agency, and it can be accessed at: http://www.emsa.europa.eu
Dealing with the after-effects of an accident

Prestige oil tanker split in two

The EU has set the task at EU level in this area, much of which is undertaken by EMSA on behalf of the Commission, is to ensure that the casualties and incidents which occur in the Community, and between Member States and the EU institutions.

This is being done in close cooperation with the Commission and the investigative authorities of the Member States.

Development of a Methodology and Guidelines

It is essential that those who carry out accident investigations throughout the European Union undertake their work in a consistent and effective way. This ensures that high quality investigations are carried out with the aim of establishing the causes and circumstances, so that effective recommendations are developed to improve maritime safety, prevent pollution and reduce the risk of casualties. In cooperation with the Commission and Member States, EMSA is developing an investigation methodology, and is also promoting the introduction of guidelines for accident investigations following maritime accidents. Indeed, the countries under whose flags most accidents happen seem to be those which carry out the investigations in the least consistent and systematic way from widespread implementation. A major concern is the independence of investigative bodies in carrying out their work.

The requirement for good cooperation between Member States, and between Member States and the EU institutions.

The requirement for accidents to be reported in an agreed way at Member State and EU levels.

The real challenge is to determine the most appropriate ways for data which deals with the causes, context descriptions, contributory factors and consequences to be collected and analyzed. This will enable risks to be identified, recommendations to be made and appropriate measures to be implemented. Within this framework, the main elements of the EMSA work programme deals with the setting up of a maritime casualty database (EMCIP), the introduction of an investigation methodology, the development of guidelines for investigations and, the provision of support in developing investigator training programmes in Member States.

EMCIP

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studies and other work at EU level and in the 27 EU/EEA Member States, Norway and Iceland. Using the EMCIP data, EMSA produces standardised European statistics in an agreed format. These are of particular importance, as it has never been possible to produce such statistics and reports before for input to decision making. The database itself has been set up by EMSA, who will also manage it on a day-to-day basis. EMCIP is web-based, with a user friendly interface so that competent authorities can provide input in an efficient manner and have easy access to the system and its information for use in their daily work.

The importance of the work is that decisions can be based on objective and reliable information and that recommendations can be guided by the facts.

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