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**REPORT OF INVESTIGATION  
INTO CAPSIZING INCIDENTS  
DURING THE  
ROYAL ST. GEORGE  
YACHT CLUB REGATTA  
IN DUBLIN BAY  
ON 5th JULY 2007.**

**REPORT No. MCIB/145**



Report MCIB/145 published by The Marine Casualty Investigation Board  
15th April 2009

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## 1. SYNOPSIS

- 1.1 The Royal St. George Junior International Class Regatta was being held on July 5th 2007 at the Royal St. George Yacht Club (R St G YC) in Dun Laoghaire (DL). One of the three sailing groups, comprising 115 boats and 141 competitors, were on the water and competing in their second race. This group were sailing in the Seapoint Bay area and ranged in age from 14 to 19 years.
- 1.2 Sometime before 14.00 hrs, a number of squalls came up suddenly from the SSE direction and the wind increased from 10/12 knots up to about 25/28 knots with gusts up to 30 knots. This caused a large number of the yachts to capsize.
- 1.3 Lifeboat assistance was requested from the Irish Coast Guard. The Major Emergency Plan was activated and a large number of emergency services attended both ashore and afloat. All competitors and safety crews were rescued successfully. Sixteen people were taken to hospital. All were discharged on the same evening/night. None were admitted to hospital. Other people, who were wet, were attended to in the R St. G YC marquee.

All times are given in British Standard Time (BST).

## 2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Royal St. George Junior International Class Regatta is held annually. In 2007, the regatta was held on July 5th and 6th at the Royal St. George Yacht Club (R St. G YC) in Dun Laoghaire.
- 2.2 On July 5th 2007, the regatta fleet was divided into three groups, which were broken down as follows:
1. The Harbour fleet, which consisted of junior sailors, were the younger and less experienced sailors. These were not allowed out sailing on 5th July 2007. They were deemed not experienced enough for the forecasted weather conditions.
  2. The Scotsman's Bay fleet were the next experienced group. This group went sailing on July 5th 2007. As the group was small in number, they had completed their two races and were returning to the harbour when the wind increased.
  3. The third group were the ones involved in the capsizing incidents. These were the most experienced group and were sailing in the Seapoint Bay area. The race course was about a half mile in length and was about a quarter of a mile off the pier. A chart of the area is given in Appendix 8.1.
- In this group were competitors from all four Dun Laoghaire based clubs, Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club, Royal Irish Yacht Club, Royal St. George Yacht Club and the National Yacht Club. There were also some competitors from other areas of the country. There were 44 boats in one fleet and 71 in the second fleet but they were managed as one group. These consisted of Lasers, 420's, Fevas, Toppers and Topaz dinghies. Photographs of some of the boat types are given in Appendix 8.2.
- In this third group, there were a total of 141 competitors taking part, ranging in age from 14 to 19 years. All these competitors had completed Irish Sailing Association approved sailing courses, mostly at Level 4 stage. Some of these competitors were very experienced and have represented their country in world youth championship events. All the competing boats belonged to individuals.
- 2.3 All competitors in all the groups were wearing their personal flotation devices. They are not allowed to sail without wearing them.

### 3. EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

- 3.1 At 04.00 hrs. on Thursday 5th July 2007, Met Éireann issued both a Gale warning and a small craft warning. The gale warning is given in Appendix 8.3 and stated "Southwest winds will reach gale force today on Irish coastal waters from Carlingford Lough to Roches point to Erris Head and on the Irish Sea south of the Isle of Man". This forecast was broadcast by MRCC Dublin on marine VHF radio at 04.15 and 06.33 hrs. BST. Irish coastal waters cover the area from the coast up to 30 nautical miles offshore.
- 3.2 The small craft warning, also issued at 04.00 hrs. is given in Appendix 8.4 and stated "Westerly winds will reach force 6 tonight on coasts from Erris Head to Malin Head to Carlingford Lough". This forecast was broadcast by MRCC Dublin on marine VHF radio at 04.03 and 06.33 hrs. BST. The Met Éireann 'Small Craft Warning' provides warnings of winds reaching a minimum of Beaufort Force 6 (minimum of 22 knots mean speed) on Irish Coastal Waters up to 10 nautical miles offshore.
- 3.3 At 06.00 hrs. on Thursday 5th July 2007, Met Éireann issued the sea area forecast valid until 06.00 hrs. on Friday 6th July 2007. This forecast is given in Appendix 8.5 and for the coasts from Carlingford Lough to Roches Point to Erris Head and the Irish Sea south of the Isle of Man the wind was forecasted to be "Southwest backing south force 4 to 6, veering SW this afternoon and increasing Force 7 to gale Force 8; then further veering west tonight". This forecast was broadcast by MRCC Dublin on marine VHF radio at 07.03 and 10.03 hrs. BST.
- 3.4 Before deciding to go to sea on 5th July 2007, both Principal Race Officers (PRO's) waited for and were aware of the forecast, broadcast at 10.03 hrs. This was the same as the latest available forecast on the internet, which they had previously reviewed. Prior to launching, the PRO's carried out the following precautions due the weather conditions:
1. Sailing for the harbour fleet group was cancelled.
  2. The forecast was posted and the competitors were briefed on its content.
  3. All available rescue craft were mobilized. With the third group there were 22 RIBs and 3 support yachts. The normal ratio of competitors to safety craft is 10 to 1.
- The competitors were tagged out from the clubs from which they departed.
- 3.5 Before they launched, the PRO's, sent a boat out to check the weather conditions. The wind was from the south at a speed of about 10 knots. They launched shortly after 10.00 hrs. The intention of the PRO's was to complete two races and then get the boats off the water before the wind veered to the SW, as was predicted in the forecast issued at 06.00 hrs.

## 4. THE INCIDENT

- 4.1 At 12.00 hrs on Thursday 5th July 2007, Met Éireann issued both a Gale warning and a small craft warning. The gale warning is given in Appendix 8.6 and stated "West to Northwest gales will develop for the rest of today or tonight on all Irish coastal waters and on the Irish Sea".
- 4.2 The small craft warning, also issued at 12.00 hrs. is given in Appendix 8.7 and stated that "Southerly or cyclonic winds will reach force 6 or 7 at times today on all sea areas. West to Northwest winds will reach force 6 or 7 on all sea areas tomorrow morning". MRCC Dublin broadcast both of these weather warnings on marine VHF radio at 12.46 and 13.33 hrs. BST.
- 4.3 Also, at 12.00 hrs. on Thursday 5th July 2007, Met Éireann issued the sea area forecast valid until 12.00 hrs. on Friday 6th July 2007. This forecast is given in Appendix 8.8 and for the coasts from Carlingford Lough to Roches Point to Erris Head and also including the Irish Sea the wind was forecasted to be "South to Southeast veering Southwest force 5 to 7. Increasing West to Northwest gale force 8 this afternoon and evening. Moderating force 6 or 7 later tonight and early tomorrow". This forecast was broadcast by MRCC Dublin on marine VHF radio at 13.03 and 16.03 hrs BST.
- 4.4 On the flagship, VHF channel 16 was being monitored and specifically the radio weather forecasts. On the flagship they were also aware of the 13.03 forecast, which indicated a further deterioration in weather and changed wind direction with increased speed. At that time the fleet were racing.
- 4.5 During the second race, the squall came up suddenly from a direction of about 165 degrees. The wind increased from 10/12 knots to about 25/28 knots in about a minute with gusts up to 30 knots.
- 4.6 About 15 minutes after the first squall, a second squall, which caused the majority of capsizes, struck the fleet. At this time, the Lifeboat was contacted, by phone from the Race Office, in order to alert them to a developing situation. The Race Office was advised to contact the Irish Coast Guard on Channel 16. About 10 minutes later the Irish Coast Guard were contacted.
- 4.7 At 13.58 hrs, Dublin Coast Guard Radio received a call from the Royal Saint George Yacht Club on VHF Channel 16 requesting lifeboat assistance to the regatta off Seapoint. At the time, the flagship was engaged in rescuing four sailors from the water immediately beside the flagship, and requested the Race Office to call the Coast Guard. It was in light of the 13.03 hrs forecast, and the actual weather conditions that then existed, that the PRO made the decision to request the assistance of the Lifeboat. At the time of the incident, the PRO estimated that the race would have been completed in about 15 or 20 minutes with a maximum completion time of 30 minutes to include stragglers.

### 5. EVENTS FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT

- 5.1 The initial information to Dublin Coast Guard Radio at 13.58 hrs BST was that there were 30 boats and 14 safety boats on the water. The MRCC Dublin tasked local lifeboats, local Coast Guard units, L.E. Aoife, the Coast Guard helicopter and other local craft to the area to assist. Both Dun Laoghaire lifeboats were launched within ten minutes. At 14.19 hrs. the R St. G YC advised MRCC Dublin that there were 91 boats out on the water with approximately 110 persons. Other rescue resources attended shortly afterwards. The regatta safety craft rescued ALL the competitors and passed some of the rescued people onto the rescuing craft for transportation ashore.
- 5.2 There were 115 boats racing with 141 competitors aboard and although some did capsize, 85 to 90 boats sailed ashore without assistance. The remaining 25 required assistance. Some had gear broken, halyards, etc. and there was panic on about 8 boats. The 22 rescue boats and 3 support yachts attended to the 25 boats as soon as possible. On instruction from the PRO people (not boats) further from the harbour were rescued first. The rescuers worked towards the harbour.
- 5.3 The Major Emergency Plan was activated with the command centre established at the R St. G YC. Those in attendance included Gardai, Ambulances, Paramedics, Fire brigade tenders, etc. Following the rescue 16 people were taken to hospital, 9 of these were discharged immediately and 7 were suffering from cold and shock. All were discharged on the same evening/night. Nobody was admitted to hospital. Other people, who were wet, were attended to in the R St. G YC marquee.
- 5.4 During the rescue operation, the survivors were brought back to all four of the Dun Laoghaire based yacht clubs. Due to this, it took some time to establish that all the competitors and rescue personnel were safely ashore. After the squall the wind stayed at about 25/28 knots from the same direction (165) until about 16.00 hrs.



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The decision to go sailing, on the morning of 5th July 2007, was a judgement call by the PRO's, taking into account the forecasted weather conditions. The decision to go sailing was based on the Met Éireann Sea Area forecast issued at 06.00 hrs. on Thursday 5th July 2007, as given in Appendix 8.5. The intention of the PRO's was to complete two races and then get the boats off the water before the wind veered to the SW, as was being predicted in the forecast issued at 06.00 hrs.
- 6.2 The gale warning issued at 04.00 hrs was in force when the boats went onto the water. (See Appendix 8.4).
- 6.3 While the broadcasted weather warnings at 12.46 hrs and sea area forecast at 13.03 hrs were obtained, they were not acted upon as it was felt that there would be sufficient time to complete the second race before the forecasted weather conditions materialised.
- 6.4 Unfortunately, due to squalls the forecasted weather conditions materialised sooner than expected and the various capsizes were caused by the sudden increase in wind speed.
- 6.5 As the various capsizes occurred, it was prudent of the PRO, taking into account the weather conditions present at the time and also the forecasted weather, to request shore side assistance.
- 6.6 During the rescue operation, the survivors were brought back to all four Dun Laoghaire based yacht clubs. In some cases competitors were brought back to a different club to the one from which they had departed. Due to this, it took some time to establish that all the competitors and rescue personnel were safely ashore. Also, it took some time to establish the exact number of boats and competitors who were taking part in that part of the regatta and who were on the water at the time of the incident.
- 6.7 Following this incident, the Irish Sailing Association (ISA) established a Working Group to identify any improvements in ISA policies, procedures and guidelines, that will help event organisers to improve safety at future events run by ISA affiliated organisations. The ISA is the national governing body for sailing in Ireland. The recommendations of the ISA events working group and agreed by the ISA Board are given at Appendix 8.9.
- 6.8 The fact that all the competitors were wearing personal flotation devices assisted in their successful recovery.
- 6.9 The competitors in this group were all level 4 sailors and were experienced in capsize conditions as part of their training.
- 6.10 It is clear that there were sufficient on water resources to handle the multiple capsizes experienced by the fleet. Also it is worth noting that all capsized competitors were assisted by the RIBs in attendance. The activation of the National emergency plan appears to have been excessive and an over reaction due to lack of understanding of the situation.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

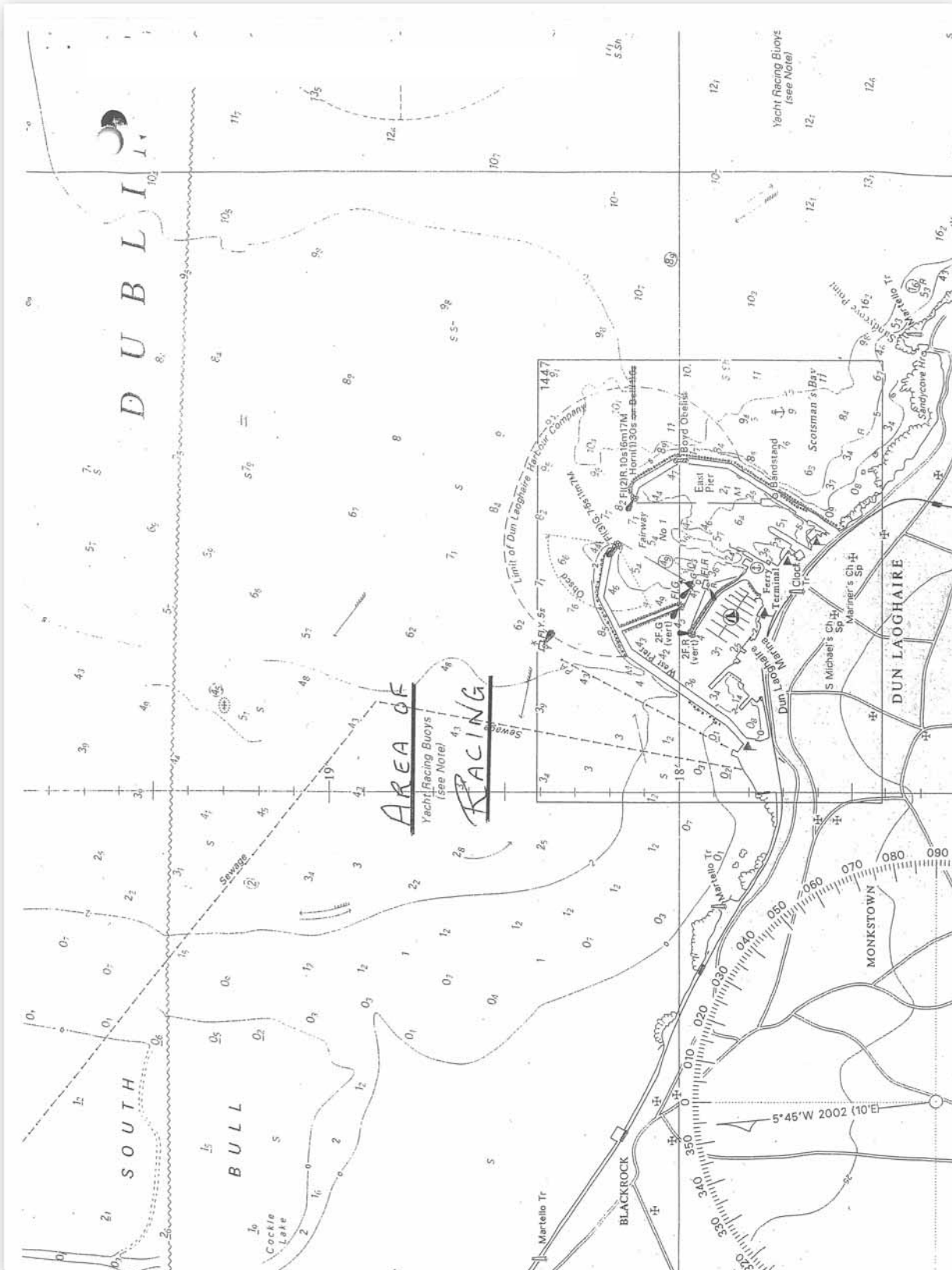
- 7.1 It is recommended that the ISA implement the safety recommendations contained in the Working Group report given at Appendix 8.9.
- 7.2 The immediate actions to be taken by a Sailing Club when a Gale Warning or Small Craft Warning is issued during a sailing competition should be clearly defined. In this regard it is noted that Recommendation 2 of the ISA working group incorporates training relating to adverse weather conditions and emergencies.
- 7.3 Yacht clubs holding a major sailing event should put in place measures for the exact recording of the number of boats and competitors taking part in the event especially when launching from multiple sites. (See recommendation 3 of the ISA working group). Also, measures should be put in place for the recording of survivors in the event that competitors and rescue personnel are brought ashore in multiple locations in an emergency situation. See recommendation 10 of the ISA working group. Both of these measures will assist the rescue services in the event of an incident on the water.

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# APPENDIX 8.1

Appendix 8.1 Chart extract of sea area off Dun Laoghaire.



Appendix 8.2 Photographs of some of the yachts types involved in the incident.





Appendix 8.2 Photographs of some of the yachts types involved in the incident.



Appendix 8.3 Met Éireann gale warning issued at 04.00 hrs on 5th July 2007.



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### Gale Warning

The following Gale Warning has been issued by Met Éireann at 04:00 hours on 05-Jul-2007

Southwest winds will reach gale force today on Irish coastal waters from Carlingford Lough to Roches Point to Erris Head and on the Irish Sea south of the Isle of Man

### Appendix 8.4 Met Éireann small craft warning issued at 04.00 hrs on 5th July 2007.



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#### Small Craft Warning

Issued at 04:00 Thursday, 5 Jul 2007

The following Small Craft Warning has been issued by Met Éireann at 04:00 hours on 05-Jul-2007

Westerly winds will reach force 6 tonight on coasts from Erris Head to Malin Head to Carlingford Lough



Appendix 8.5 Met Éireann sea area forecast issued at 06.00 hrs on 5th July 2007.



Sea Area Forecast until 0600 Friday 06 July 2007  
 Issued at 0600 Thursday 05 July 2007

1. Gale warning: In operation.  
 Small craft warning: In operation.

2. **Meteorological situation at 0300:** A deepening depression of 1000 hPa centered 200 miles southwest of Valentia moves quickly northeastwards. The associated frontal system will cross Ireland today.

3. **Forecast for coasts from Carlingford Lough to Roches Point to Erris Head and the Irish Sea south of the Isle of Man:**

**Wind:** Southwest backing south force 4 to 6, veering southwest this afternoon and increasing force 7 to gale force 8; then further veering west tonight.

**Weather:** Rain, drizzle and mist. A clearance to scattered showers later today. Further showery rain in the east and on the Irish Sea tonight.

**Visibility:** Mostly poor in rain, but sometimes good later.

**Forecast for coasts from Erris Head to Malin Head to Carlingford Lough and the Irish Sea north of the Isle of Man:**

**Wind:** Southeast to south force 3 to 5 this morning; becoming cyclonic variable for a time this afternoon and evening; then increasing west force 5 to 6 tonight.

**Weather:** Mainly fair at first; Rain this afternoon and evening, turning showery tonight.

**Visibility:** Good, becoming moderate or poor in rain.

3a. **Warning of heavy swell:** Nil

4. **Outlook for a further 24 hours until 0600 Saturday 07 July 2007:** Strong to near gale force westerly winds gradually decreasing fresh. Rain mainly on northeast coasts and on the Irish Sea clearing to scattered showers.

**Appendix 8.5 Met Éireann sea area forecast issued at 06.00 hrs on 5th July 2007.**

Warning of heavy Atlantic swell: NIL

**Text of Gale Warning**

Southwest winds will reach gale force today on Irish coastal waters from Carlingford Lough to Roches Point to Erris Head and on the Irish Sea south of the Isle of Man

**Text of Small Craft Warning**

Westerly winds will reach force 6 tonight on coasts from Erris Head to Malin Head to Carlingford Lough

Coastal Reports	at 5 AM Thursday 5 July 2007
Malin Head	Southwest, 14 Knots, Rain/drizzle, 2 Miles, 1007, Steady
Rosslare	NOT AVAILABLE,
Johnstown Castle Automatic (about 7 miles NW of Rosslare)	Southwest 5 Knots, 1013, Falling Slowly, Vis at Tuskar lighthouse over 10 Miles.
Roche's Pt (Automatic)	Southwest, 08 Knots, Greater than 10 Miles, 1013, Steady
Valentia	South, 05 Knots, Light rain, 8 Miles, 1012, Falling
Belmullet	West-Southwest, 12 Knots, Cloudy, 8 Miles, 1009, Falling slowly
Dublin Airport	West-Southwest, 13 Knots, Cloudy, 16 Miles, 1010, Steady
Buoy M1 53° 8'N, 11° 12'W	NOT AVAILABLE,
Buoy M2 53° 29'N, 5° 26'W	West-Southwest, 14 Knots, WAVE HT 01.1 m, 1010, Steady
Buoy M3 51° 13'N, 10° 33'W	South, 13 Knots, WAVE HT 02.5 m, 1012, Falling rapidly
Buoy M4 55° 0'N 10° 0'W	West-Southwest, 14 Knots, WAVE HT 01.9 m, 1007, Falling slowly
Buoy M5 51° 41'N 6° 42'W	West, 15 Knots, WAVE HT 01.8 m, 1014, Falling slowly
Buoy M6 53° 4'N 15° 56'W	East-Southeast, 22 Knots, WAVE HT 01.8 m, 1002, Falling very rapidly

Disclaimer: buoy locations are approximate and are not for navigational purposes

Sea Crossings	State of sea until 0300 Saturday 07 July 2007
Dublin - Holyhead	Rough decreasing moderate
Rosslare - South Wales	Rough decreasing moderate
Cork - South Wales	Rough decreasing moderate
Rosslare - France	Very rough decreasing rough
Cork - France	Very rough decreasing rough

Next update before 1300 Thursday, 05 July 2007

A detailed forecast may be obtained by dialling *Weatherdial* on 1550 123 855.

Calls cost € 0.95 per minute (Incl. VAT).

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Appendix 8.6 Met Éireann gale warning issued at 12.00 hrs on 5th July 2007.



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Gale Warning

The following Gale Warning has been issued by Met Éireann at 12:00 hours on 05-Jul-2007

**West to Northwest gales will develop for the rest of today or tonight on all Irish Coastal Waters and on the Irish Sea**

Appendix 8.7 Met Éireann small craft warning issued at 12.34 hrs on 5th July 2007.



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### Small Craft Warning

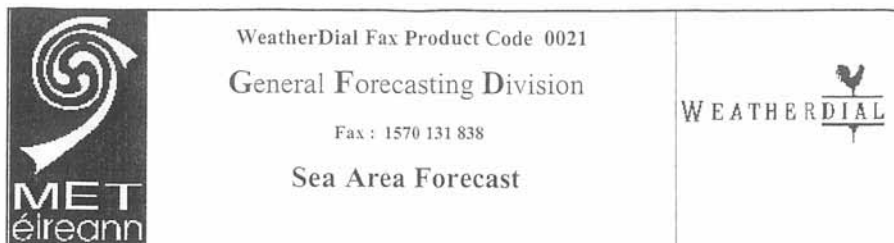
Issued at 12:34 Thursday, 5 Jul 2007

The following Small Craft Warning has been issued by Met Éireann at 12:00 hours on 05-Jul-2007

Southerly or cyclonic winds will reach force 6 or 7 at times today on all sea areas.

West to, Northwest winds will reach force 6 or 7 on all sea areas tomorrow morning.

Appendix 8.8 Met Éireann sea area forecast issued at 12.00 hrs on 5th July 2007.



Sea Area Forecast until 1200 Friday 06 July 2007  
Issued at 1200 Thursday 05 July 2007

1. **Gale warning:** in operation  
Small craft warning: in operation
2. **Meteorological situation at 11am:** A deepening depression of 997 hPa just off the West coast will move Northeastwards across the country today to be centred in the North Sea by this time tomorrow.
3. **Forecast for coasts from Erris Head to Malin Head to Carlingford Lough:**  
  
**Wind:** South to Southeast force 4 to 6, becoming cyclonic force 5 to 7 this afternoon and evening. Increasing West to Northwest force 6 to gale force 8 tonight. Moderating force 5 to 7 early tomorrow.  
  
**Weather:** Outbreaks of rain.  
  
**Visibility:** Moderate or poor.  
  
**Forecast for coasts from Carlingford Lough to Roches Point to Erris Head and also including the Irish Sea:**  
  
**Wind:** South to Southeast veering Southwest force 5 to 7. Increasing West to Northwest gale force gale force 8 this afternoon and evening. Moderating force 6 or 7 later tonight and early tomorrow.  
  
**Weather:** Outbreaks of rain clearing to scattered showers later today.  
  
**Visibility:** Moderate or poor improving moderate to good.
4. **Outlook for a further 24 hours until 1200 Saturday 07 July 2007:**  
Fresh Westerly winds with scattered showers.

**Appendix 8.8 Met Éireann sea area forecast issued at 12.00 hrs on 5th July 2007.**

Warning of heavy Atlantic swell: NIL

**Text of Gale Warning**

West to Northwest gales will develop for the rest of today or tonight on all Irish Coastal Waters and on the Irish Sea

**Text of Small Craft Warning**

Southerly or cyclonic winds will reach force 6 or 7 at times today on all sea areas.

West to, Northwest winds will reach force 6 or 7 on all sea areas tomorrow morning.

Coastal Reports	at 12 Noon Thursday 5 July 2007
Malin Head	South, 08 Knots, Light rain, 16 Miles, 1004, Falling slowly
Rosslare	South, 17 Knots, Gust 30 Knots, Light drizzle, 10 Miles, 1008, Falling
Roche's Pt (Automatic)	Southwest, 20 Knots, 7 Miles, 1005, Steady
Valentia	South-Southwest, 15 Knots, Recent rain, 5 Miles, 1003, Falling
Belmullet	South-Southeast, 13 Knots, Gust 24 Knots, Light rain, 9 Miles, 1000, Falling rapidly
Dublin Airport	South, 07 Knots, Light rain, 13 Miles, 1007, Falling
Buoy M1 53° 8'N, 11° 12'W	NOT AVAILABLE,
Buoy M2 53° 29'N, 5° 26'W	South-Southwest, 18 Knots, WAVE HT 01.1 m, 1008, Falling slowly
Buoy M3 51° 13'N, 10° 33'W	Southwest, 22 Knots, WAVE HT 02.5 m, 1005, Falling slowly
Buoy M4 55° 0'N 10° 0'W	Southeast, 13 Knots, WAVE HT 01.7 m, 1001, Falling
Buoy M5 51° 41'N 6° 42'W	South, 23 Knots, WAVE HT 01.6 m, 1007, Falling rapidly
Buoy M6 53° 4'N 15° 56'W	North-Northwest, 29 Knots, Gust 46 Knots, WAVE HT 03.1 m, 1002, Rising rapidly

Disclaimer: buoy locations are approximate and are not for navigational purposes

Sea Crossings	State of sea until 1100 Saturday 07 July 2007
Dublin - Holyhead	Moderate to rough
Rosslare - South Wales	Moderate to rough
Cork - South Wales	Rough
Rosslare - France	Rough
Cork - France	Rough

Next update before 1900 Thursday, 05 July 2007

A detailed forecast may be obtained by dialling *Weatherdial* on 1550 123 855.

Calls cost € 0.95 per minute (Incl. VAT).

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Appendix 8.9 Recommendations of the ISA Events Working Group.



## Recommendations of the ISA Events Working Group

**Aim:** To identify any improvements in ISA policies, procedures and guidelines, that will help event organisers to improve safety at future dinghy events run by ISA affiliated organisations.



**Appendix 8.9 Recommendations of the ISA Events Working Group.****Recommendations****Pre Event Planning****1. Communicate with Local Garda**

One of the factors that delayed the process of accounting for everyone ashore, was a lack of awareness by the emergency services of the established procedures of event organisers to manage the event, and account for everyone ashore. In accordance with emergency procedures, competitors were taken to hospital without being allowed to check in, one of the race management team was also taken to hospital before she was allowed to report to the shore team. The event organisers were given restricted access to the club and slipways. This led to a delay in establishing the safety of everyone involved with the event.

**ISA Affiliated organisations should establish relationships with local Garda, in order to develop a clearer understanding within the Garda of how sailing events are organised, and what the organisations own procedures are for dealing with emergencies.**

**In advance of major events, event organisers/key personnel should exchange contact details with local Garda, particularly mobile phone details of key personnel.**

**2. Training of Race Officers**

The working group acknowledges the excellent training programmes in place for the sailors and safety boat crews. The ISA Race Officer Training Programme is very comprehensive in organising racing, however, it has limited syllabus in relation to emergency response. The decisions of the Principal Race Officer on the day were made largely as a result of his experience.

**The ISA should develop modules in their Race Officer training programme for dealing with adverse weather conditions, and emergencies.**

**3. Regatta Entry**

One of the significant difficulties associated with the recording of competitors, is the practice (particularly in junior events) of entering on the morning of the event. This puts significant pressure on event organisers who are inevitably



## Appendix 8.9 Recommendations of the ISA Events Working Group.

busy immediately prior to an event. It also makes it difficult to produce accurate lists of competitors, plan for safety cover, plan the courses etc.

**Event organisers should look at their procedures for taking entries to ensure accurate records of competitors, and that there is sufficient resource to cover safety for the event.**

### 4. Communicating with the Coastguard

There was some confusion amongst the press and emergency services in relation to how many potential casualties there were. Although there were significant numbers of boats on the water that afternoon, there were only a handful who were in potential difficulty and were unable to make it to the shore under their own steam. There is no doubt the large numbers involved triggered the emergency operation, however the working group suspects the reaction of the media and emergency services might have been different if actual numbers of boats potentially in need of assistance had been reported, instead of the number of boats involved in the event.

**ISA should liaise with the Coast Guard to ascertain the best method of communicating the number of people who may be in need of assistance and what an appropriate response to the situation would be.**

### 5. Identifying the Ability of the Competitors

There are an increasing number of roto-moulded plastic boats (Topaz, Feva, Pico etc) appearing at junior events and on junior training courses. Whilst these boats are becoming increasingly popular and are excellent in many ways, there are some draw backs to them. Because they are relatively new in Ireland, and the class structures are only in their infancy, there is no established grading system of ability as there is with other junior classes – the bronze, silver & gold fleets of the optimist class for example.

**The ISA should work with these classes to develop a more structured system to identify the ability and experience of the sailors within the class.**

**For the larger junior events requiring more than one fleet, event organisers should establish a system to ensure that competitors are entered into a fleet with sailors of similar abilities.**

### 6. Emergency Plan

The wind made normal communications on V.H.F. between the Principal Race Officer and safety craft particularly difficult. Furthermore, responding to

## Appendix 8.9 Recommendations of the ISA Events Working Group.

messages can divert attention from safety duties. Pre-event safety planning should take these factors into consideration.

A comprehensive emergency plan should be in place for every event. This should take account of the fact that communication with the Race Officer may be difficult or impossible. Having all radios enclosed in waterproof bags has been shown to reduce wind noise.

Support craft should be included in the emergency plan, and support craft crews (usually parents) should be briefed on their responsibilities in the event of an emergency – e.g. they may be tasked to tow boats ashore in order to free up safety craft.

### On the Water

#### **7. Identifying Abandoned Boats**

Some boats appeared to have been abandoned as a result of competitors being separated from their boats during capsize and who may still be in the water. Without the support of the helicopter thermal imaging camera, identifying boats that had been deliberately abandoned by competitors and safety crews would have been difficult.

**The ISA should recommend a system of identifying abandoned boats and suitable equipment should be carried in the safety boats. Safety boat crews should be briefed on how and when to use the system.**

#### **8. Crewing of Safety Craft**

It appears that a small number of safety craft had just one person on board. This limits their effectiveness in carrying out safety duties.

**Event organisers should be advised that safety boats should be crewed by at least two people, one of whom should have appropriate qualifications and/or experience.**

### Returning to the Shore

#### **9. Identifying Event Organisers**

One of the main difficulties reported by the emergency services was their inability to identify the event organisers. This made their task when they arrived on scene very difficult, as some event organisers were treated as

## Appendix 8.9 Recommendations of the ISA Events Working Group.

potential casualties, and were not given free access to the club, which hindered their task of accounting for everyone ashore.

**The ISA should recommend standardised policies and procedures for use at sailing regattas, that would allow emergency services to quickly and accurately identify event organisers in the event of an emergency.**

### 10. Accounting for Sailors Ashore

One of the difficulties experienced during the event was the ability to quickly account for everyone ashore. This was made all the more difficult on account of boats launching from multiple sites, and not necessarily returning to the same launch site.

**Event organisers should establish and enforce a clear system for ensuring all sailors are checked out going afloat and checked in coming ashore at all dinghy events.**

### 11. Media Plan

There was significant media interest generated during this incident, that was exacerbated by the lack of information that was going out through official channels during the emergency operation. This caused the media to seek information from any source they could, which may not always be accurate - adding fuel to the fire.

**ISA should incorporate media training in their club officer training programmes.**

**Event organisers should designate a media liaison for major events.**

## 9. LIST OF CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

	PAGE
9.1 Dun Laoghaire Harbour MCIB Response	29 29
9.2 Royal St. George Yacht Club MCIB Response	32 34
9.3 Met Éireann MCIB Response	35 35
9.4 Irish Sailing Association MCIB Response	36 36
9.5 Irish Coast Guard MCIB Response	37 37



Ms. Bridie Cullinane, Secretary,  
Marine Casualty Investigation Board,  
Leeson Lane,  
Dublin 2.

Harbour Office  
Terminal Building  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin  
Ireland

21<sup>st</sup>. November, 2008.

Telephone 353 1 280 1130  
353 1 280 8074  
Facsimile 353 1 280 8062  
email: info@diharbour.ie  
Web: www.diharbour.ie

**Re. Draft Report  
RStGYC Regatta**

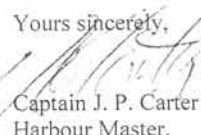
Dear Ms. Cullinane,

I have received the draft and there are three observations I wish to make upon same:-

The harbour master was in attendance at the Command Centre, but not specifically named (Page seven, section 5.3 ) Being as the landings, of a declared emergency , were taking place in the harbour I feel it would be somewhat amiss to omit the confirmation of the presence of the harbour master.

The choice of holding the regatta did not hinge on the acceptance of taking the weather risk outside of the confines of the harbour. RStGYC had applied in writing, prior to the event, to hold the event within the harbour and permission had been so given , in writing, by the harbour master.

A new protocol for dealing with emergencies, " A Framework For Major Emergency Management" was published 12<sup>th</sup>. September 2006 and the four emergency agencies were tasked to have their revised procedures in place by the end of September, 2008. Obviously this period overlaps the time of the regatta and so the resultant ISA recommendations may require to be "tweaked" to include reference to the local authorities – in relation to local authorities being designated (bar the Irish Coastguard, who remain in charge of search and rescue -including in ports) as **the** lead authority in major emergencies.

Yours sincerely,  
  
Captain J. P. Carter  
Harbour Master.



rior to the event ssion in

From: Mr Sean Costello - Chairman, Mr Victor Boyhan, Cllr Jane Dillan Byrne, Ms Betty Coffey, Mr Patrick Cowhey, Mr Michael Hanahoe, (Chief Executive and Company Secretary), Cllr Patrick Hand, Ms Eithne Scott Lennon, Mr Seighin Lennon, Mr Don McManus, Mr Gerry Nagle, Cllr Carrie Smyth

Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company

**MCIB RESPONSE**

The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.



Ms. S. Addis,  
Events Manager,  
Royal St. George Yacht Club,  
Dun Laoghaire Harbour.

22<sup>nd</sup>. June, 2007.

**Ref. Youth Regatta  
5<sup>th</sup>.+ 6<sup>th</sup>. July, 2007.**

Harbour Office  
Terminal Building  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Duelling  
Ireland

Telephone 353 1 280 1130  
353 1 280 8074  
Facsimile 353 1 280 8062  
email: info@dlharbour.ie  
Web: www.dlharbour.ie

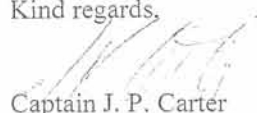
Dear Ms. Addis,

Permission is granted to hold the above races in the area (off the head of the Carlisle Pier) and as the conditions as outlined in your letter of 14/06/07. Of special note, and to be relayed to the organisers, is to ensure the fairway is be well cleared before the arrival of the HSS - the last thing wanted is a mad, panic scramble as the ferry turns the pierheads !

HSS "Stena Explorer" will remain, as now, on its two trips per day schedule but, as always, there is always the possibility of the harbour also being used by other large power driven vessels. Therefore please contact the Harbour Office (tel.01-2801130) on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> to check on shipping movements. There is no notification of other shipping as I write, but ILV "Granuaile" is returning to this general area - after having been away around the coast for the last six weeks or so.

Repair work has been completed on No.4 Berth (next to Harbour Office) and the contractor is currently demobilising. The berth is expected to be open for shipping next week and that being so, during the Dun Laoghaire Regatta, STV "Jeanie Johnston" would be berth at the East Pier and No.4 Berth would be available for use by the Naval Service.

Kind regards,

  
Captain J. P. Carter  
Harbour Master





ROYAL ST GEORGE YACHT CLUB  
DUN LAOGHAIRE CO. DUBLIN TEL: 280 1811 FAX: 284 3002

14<sup>th</sup> June 2007

Captain Carter  
Harbour Master  
Dun Laoghaire Harbour  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin


Dear Captain Carter,

I would like to request permission on behalf of the organiser of the Youth Regatta to race in the common water in front of the RSGYC and NYC Clubs. This a two day event held on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2007. This event will be run in Mirrors, Optimists, Lasers, 420's, Fevas, Vibes and Toppers dinghies. There will be a small fleet of optimists and mirrors in the harbour. There will also be 5 rescue/umpire boats in attendance and the Committee boat will be "The Goose". The organisers would like to have permission to lay marks in the race area.

The organisers of the event are aware of the fact that they must keep clear of large power driven vessels including the HSS and other craft using the harbour and not to obstruct the fairways with boats or marks when any large craft require the use of them.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me, I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

  
Suzy Addis  
Events Manager



## ROYAL ST GEORGE YACHT CLUB

DUN LAOGHAIRE, CO DUBLIN, IRELAND

Tel 353 1 2801811 Fax 353 1 2843002 www.rsgyc.ie info@rsgyc.ie

From the Commodore

*17 December 2008.*

Ms. B Cullinane  
Secretary  
Marine Casualty Investigation Board  
Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2

Dear Madam,

**Report of the MCIB Investigation into an incident at The Royal St George Yacht Club International Classes Youth Regatta in July 2007.**

We have received your draft report and are responding to you within the terms set out in your letter of November 21<sup>st</sup> 2008. The contents of the draft report has been considered by the Flag Officers of the Club.

Based on our own review of the event, the review by the Irish Sailing Association (ISA) and your report; we concur with the conclusions reached (Section 6) and have implemented the recommendations.

This response to your draft report provides background to the safety environment which the club seeks at all times to establish when running events, particularly youth events.

We are fully aware of the challenges our young sailors encounter in their sailing activities, and in particular those associated with difficult weather conditions. Consistent with the ISA youth training scheme, the club has always sought to ensure that our sailors, and race management organisation for junior and other regattas, are fully primed to deal with all contingencies which might arise.

This includes the following:






- Our race management teams are both experienced and have nationally recognised qualifications. They are all experienced sailors themselves and many, as on this occasion, have particular experience in youth and junior events. The conditions experienced on this occasion were very demanding and our event team dealt properly with the challenge presented. The decision of the Principal Race Officer (PRO) to request the assistance of the RNLI was, we believe, a prudent and timely response to deteriorating weather conditions.
- We ensure that all competitors and on-the-water personnel are wearing appropriate personal flotation devices (lifejackets) at all times. No competitor is allowed launch at any Regatta without wearing their lifejacket. This is so strongly imbued in our sport that it is now simply a part of the sailing routine.
- We train our junior sailors to cope with adverse weather conditions. They are given practice and experience in strong winds and in the handling and recovery (following capsizes) of their boats in challenging conditions, so that they can cope with such conditions when they arise. The vast majority of the young sailors in this Regatta brought their own craft ashore unaided, there was no panic, and the sailors returned the following day for the second days racing.
- We provide rescue resources appropriate for the conditions forecast and the experience of the sailors participating in the Regatta, both in terms of personnel and in the quality of rescue boats used (preferably RIB's), such that sailors in need of assistance, or with broken or damaged equipment can be brought ashore quickly and safely. The priority is to rescue people rather than boats. In this Regatta, all competitors needing assistance were brought ashore by the event rescue personnel, and all boats were recovered.
- We provide experienced shore volunteers (typically parents whose children have come through the youth training programmes, often sailors themselves) and have club staff (experienced boatmen) available to deal with junior competitors on their return ashore; to assist them in retrieving their boats, deal with any injuries (minor cuts and exposures on this occasion), cope with their needs and account for all competitors and other personnel. This latter task, while difficult in this incident, was accomplished by the shore based event team
- As this was the first occasion when the National Emergency Plan was activated for a sailing event, we were not familiar with either the basis, on which such decisions are made, or the nature and extent of the response provided. With the benefit of hindsight, we concur with the MCIB draft conclusion in section 6.10. We have worked with the authorities since this incident to ensure that both the authorities and our event teams are familiar with the procedures put in place by each party to deal with emergency situations, and to ensure we can all respond in an appropriate fashion to any emergency situation encountered in the future.

Our view is that the report by the MCIB is well constructed, informed and welcome.

We would like to record our appreciation of the work done in preparing this report and we are grateful for the assistance given by all the emergency personnel involved during this incident.

Yours sincerely

  
Brian MacManus  
Commodore

## MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.



**MET ÉIREANN**  
*The Irish Meteorological Service*

Glasnevin Hill, Cnoc Ghlas Naíon Tel: +353-1-806 4200  
Dublin 9, Ireland. Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire. Fax: +353-1-806 4247  
www.met.ie E-mail: met.eireann@met.ie

Your Reference: MCIB/145  
Our Reference: WS 3018/2A / 20070705ma

Marine Casualty Investigation Board  
Ms Bridie Cullinane, Secretary  
Marine Survey Office  
Department of Transport  
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2

16 December 2008

Dear Board Members, Dear Ms Cullinane,

Thank you for your letter of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008 allowing us to comment on the Draft Report of the investigation into the incident involving 115 vessels participating at the Annual Royal St. George Regatta, Dun Laoghaire, on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

Met Éireann does not have any comments to add to the report.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Phelan'.

Willemien Phelan, MSc.  
Marine Meteorologist  
Phone: 01 8064285  
Email: willemien.phelan@met.ie



**MCIB RESPONSE**

The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.

ISA

3 Park Road, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland.  
T: +353 (0)1 280 0239 F: +353 (0)1 250 7558  
E: info@sailing.ie W: www.sailing.ie

Ms Bridie Cullinane  
Secretary  
MCIB  
Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2

28 November 2008

**Ref: MCIB/145**

Dear Ms Cullinane,

Thank you for the copy of the draft report into the capsizing incidents at the Royal St George Junior International Classes Regatta on July 5, 2007.

There is nothing in the factual information and events surrounding the incident as detailed in the report, that would give us reason not to support the recommendations and conclusions.

The ISA therefore, has no further comment or amendments to suggest on your report.

Yours sincerely,



Harry Hermon  
Chief Executive



ISA Directors: Peter Crowley (President), Simon Coats, Philip Cowman, Alan Crosbie, Cathy MacAlevy,  
Niamh McCutcheon, Oliver Hart, Michael O'Connor, John Presler, Harry Hermon (CEO).

## MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.

Head Office  
Transport House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2, Ireland,  
Príomh-Oifig  
Teach Iompair, Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.

Department of Transport



Tel +353 1 6707444    Locall 1890 443311    Fax +353 1 6709633    Web www.transport.ie

24<sup>th</sup> November 2008

John G. O'Donnell, B.L.,  
Chairman,  
MCIB

**MCIB Draft Sailing Incident in Dun Laoghaire**

Dear Mr. O' Donnell,

With regard to Para 1.3 of the report the Irish Coast Guard wishes to point out that it did not activate the Major Emergency Plan. The shore Principal Emergency Services, following the Coast Guards notification of the incident to the Garda Communications Centre, activated the plan. The Coast Guard recognises that the reconciliation of numbers of rescued persons by shore reception parties and Principal Emergency Services and the sea/land communication interface are common issues internationally following mass rescue events and are engaged with the National Steering Group on the Major Emergency Framework Document to further develop current protocols.

Para 4.7. The Irish Coast Guard would request that the recommendations should reflect a need for greater understanding by the marine community that in the first stages of any event such as this the Coast Guard should be informed without delay; even if only to be put on notice of a developing incident. It is far better to recall rescue vessels and aircraft than to respond too late. Any local communication to local rescue organisations whether local Coast Guard Units, RNLI, or other agency should be carried out after the VHF Channel 16/999/112 call has been made.

Yours sincerely,

  
Chris Reynolds,  
Director,  
Irish Coast Guard,  
Department of Transport.



Coast Guard HQ, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2

Irish Coast Guard  
GARDA COSTA na hÉIREANN



**MCIB RESPONSE**

The MCIB notes the contents of this response and points out that Paragraph 1.3 does not state that the Irish Coast Gard activated the Major Emergency Plan.





