

In the Dorset Coroner's Court

BEFORE HM SENIOR CORONER MRS GRIFFIN

IN THE INQUEST TOUCHING UPON THE DEATH OF

IVAN RUMENOV IGNATOV

**Response to Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths on behalf of the Royal National
Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)**

Background

1. The Senior Coroner has identified two concerns relevant to the RNLI which relate to the tragic death of Mr Ignatov. Those are;
 - a. Communication between all agencies; and
 - b. Lack of knowledge and/or understanding amongst emergency services and search and rescue services around process and terminology.
2. The RNLI is a charity that provides, amongst other things, a 24/7 search and rescue lifeboat service through a strategically located fleet of over 400 lifeboats located at 238 lifeboat stations across the UK, Jersey, Guernsey and Isle of Man
3. The RNLI operates two main classes of lifeboat – all-weather lifeboats and inshore lifeboats. Within these categories, there are a number of different vessels and specific capabilities. Broadly speaking, all-weather lifeboats are capable of 25kts and are designed to operate in all weather conditions, day or night and out to 100 nautical miles from the coastline. They are inherently self-righting after a capsize and fitted with an array of navigation, and search and rescue equipment. The RNLI all-weather fleet currently consists of the Shannon, Severn, Trent, Tamar and Mersey class lifeboats. Inshore lifeboats are subject to weather limitations. However, they have their own advantages in that they can reach people in circumstances where the all-weather lifeboats could not. They usually operate closer to shore, in shallower water, near cliffs, and rocks. They are designed to be quick and manoeuvrable, allowing RNLI crews to get as close as possible to those in need of assistance. The inshore lifeboat fleet consists of the B and D class lifeboats, as well as the E class lifeboats on the River Thames. In

addition, the RNLI also uses hovershore rescue hovercraft for areas that are inaccessible to conventional RNLI lifeboats such as mud flats and river estuaries. Hovercraft are sited at Hoylake, Hunstanton, Morecambe, and Southend lifeboat stations.

4. As the Senior Coroner is aware the RNLI works closely with, but is not part of, HM Coastguard (the “**Coastguard**”). The government has a statutory duty to provide search and rescue, and this is provided through the Coastguard. RNLI lifeboats are a voluntarily “**declared asset**” to the Coastguard and will respond to tasking requests made by the Coastguard. A **declared asset** is a facility that has given a declaration to the Coastguard of a certain level of capability and availability and/or training such that they form part of the Coastguard’s incident response process. The Coastguard is responsible for coordinating rescues at sea including determining the deployment of appropriate assets. As well as the RNLI lifeboats this may also include assets owned and operated by other organisations.

Communications

5. As the Coastguard is the tasking authority and responsible for coordinating searches, the method of communication with the Lifeboat is via the Coastguard following IMSAR protocols as a maritime search and rescue capability. Having other multiple organisations able to communicate with the Lifeboat is not effective. It can lead to conflicting information being given and undermine effective tasking as well as creating a distraction for the crews receiving multiple messages. This, in turn, could hamper the effectiveness of the lifesaving service and lives could be lost if the crew are distracted or given conflicting information.
6. For these reasons it is not considered appropriate for the other agencies such as the police to have direct contact with the Lifeboats.

Process and terminology

7. It is clear from the inquest that more work needs to be undertaken so that other emergency services/search and rescue partners understand the RNLI’s capabilities and how it operates.
8. Further it is also clear that more work needs to be undertaken to ensure emergency services/search and rescue partners understand the terminology that is used in relation to the RNLI to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding with those emergency services/search and rescue partners. By way of example around the difference between tasking and launching.
9. The RNLI is therefore in the process of updating a page on the government website called “ResilienceDirect” platform (resilience.gov.uk). It will give details about our capabilities and so that this information can be readily available to emergency services/search and rescue partners. We also pulling together material to be shared directly with emergency services partners which focusses on capabilities and limitations such as search equipment and communication capabilities.

10. The RNLI will also work with the Coastguard to participate in some partner awareness 'open day' events that showcase capabilities between emergency services/search and rescue partners.