

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Evaluation of the Search and Rescue Services Program

The Canadian Coast Guard's maritime Search and Rescue Services program leads, delivers, and maintains preparedness for the 5.3 million square kilometer maritime component of the federal search and rescue program, with the support of stakeholders and partners, including the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Department of National Defence. Through communication, coordination, and the delivery of maritime search and rescue response and operational awareness, the program increases the chances of rescue for people caught in on-water distress situations. The Fleet Operational Readiness and Marine Communications and Traffic Services programs are integral contributors to the delivery of the program. The program's legal basis derives from the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the *Oceans Act, 1996* and the *Canada Shipping Act, 2001*.

WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

Search and Rescue Services Program – Key Findings

- As a result of its mandate to detect, coordinate and respond, there is a continuing need for the Search and Rescue Services Program as evidenced by the steady number of maritime search and rescue incidents. The Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) is the recognized federal authority to coordinate maritime search and rescue services and is a participant to various international treaties, conventions and agreements and must make adequate arrangements for maritime search and rescue within its area of responsibility.
- Evidence demonstrates that lives are being saved with the CCG and Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary (CCGA) each being both prepared and available to assist people in need of help in the maritime environment. Known risks to search and rescue coverage are being mitigated in collaboration with search and rescue partners. More specifically, in the CCG Atlantic Region where the number of days planned and days delivered have decreased for CCG large vessels, the CCG is mitigating this situation by calling upon the Royal Canadian Navy to assist in alleviating the coverage risks. Furthermore, the evaluation also highlights that the CCGA contributes to the overall efficiency of the CCG SAR program by handling 24% of all maritime SAR taskings.
- Over the last five years, the number of operational days where the exemptions sought for rescue specialists doubled (from 4% to 8%), representing a total number of 2,668 operational days in 2015. There is evidence that new Rescue Specialists are being trained and many existing Rescue Specialists are being re-certificated. Nonetheless, the CCG is not achieving its crewing levels and a solution is required in order to avoid possible negative impacts on the preparedness of the CCG.
- There is evidence that the CCG SAR Program is managing costs through its efforts to optimize search and rescue resources when tasking a response to a maritime search and rescue incident as well as through its use of lower cost service delivery mechanisms (e.g. Inshore Rescue Boat Service and CCGA).

- A significant obstacle to the maritime search and rescue system achieving even greater efficiency are the high number of incidents involving pleasure craft. Unlike other on-water users (e.g. commercial & fishing) where there have been reductions in the number of incidents, the pleasure craft group not only represents the single largest search object category, but the number and severity of incidents are also continuing to rise. An evaluation completed by Transport Canada confirmed that a large recreational boating population exists in Canada but that prevention efforts are likely being limited by the fact that there is a relatively small federal boating safety program. In the same evaluation Transport Canada determined that there was no measureable evidence of the impact of current federal efforts on boating safety attitudes, behaviour or overall awareness about boating safety.

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that the CCG develop and implement a strategy aimed at meeting the required ship's crewing profile outlined in the Canadian Coast Guard Fleet Order #535 (i.e. Minimum number of designated rescue specialists on board Canadian Coast Guard ships with a complement of four or more).

ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

This report presents the results of the evaluation of CCG Search and Rescue Services Program. In 2015-16, total spending on the CCG Search and Rescue Program was \$31,104,607.

The evaluation covers the five-year period from 2011-12 through 2015-16 and was conducted by DFO's Evaluation Directorate. The CCG Search and Rescue Program was last evaluated in 2011-12.

For more information about this evaluation and its findings, please consult the Evaluation of the Search and Rescue Services Program report, including the Management Action Plan accessible online at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ae-ve/evaluations-eng.htm>