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MCAR 12 Search & Rescue

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Maldives Civil Aviation Authority
Republic of Maldives

Maldivian Civil Aviation Regulations

MCAR-12 Search and Rescue

Foreword

Maldives Civil Aviation Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred on it under Articles 5 and 6 of the Maldives Civil Aviation Authority Act 2/2012 has adopted this Regulation.

This Regulation shall be cited as MCAR-12 Search and Rescue and shall come into force on 7th May 2025.

Existing aviation requirements listed in MCAR-13 Search and Rescue dated 1 October 2010 will be repealed as from 7th May 2025.

Definitions of the terms and abbreviations used in this regulation, unless the context requires otherwise, are in MCAR-1 Definitions and Abbreviations.

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CHAPTER 1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions of the terms and abbreviations used in this regulation, unless the context requires otherwise or unless stated otherwise in this chapter, are in MCAR-1 Definitions and Abbreviations.

CHAPTER 2 ORGANISATION

2.1 Search and rescue services

- 2.1.1 The Search and Rescue service Providers shall arrange for the establishment and prompt provision of search and rescue services within Maldives search and rescue region to ensure that assistance is rendered to persons in distress. Such services shall be provided on a 24-hour basis.
- 2.1.1.1 Search and Rescue services shall be provided within the entire Maldivian Territory including territorial waters on the basis of regional agreements. Such services shall also be provided over those portions of the high seas or areas of undetermined sovereignty for which the SAR provider has accepted responsibility to provide search and rescue services.
- 2.1.1.2 Search and Rescue service providers shall ensure that the basic elements are available in the provision of search and rescue services, which shall include resources, communication facilities and a workforce skilled in coordination and operational functions.
- 2.1.1.3 Search and Rescue service providers shall establish processes to improve service provision, including the aspects of planning, domestic and international cooperative arrangements and training.
- 2.1.2 Search and Rescue service providers shall ensure that assistance is provided to aircraft in distress and to survivors of aircraft accidents, regardless of the nationality or status of such persons or the circumstances in which such persons are found.
- 2.1.3 Search and Rescue service providers shall use search and rescue units and other available facilities to assist any aircraft or its occupants that are or appear to be in a state of emergency.
- 2.1.4 Where separate aeronautical and maritime rescue coordination centres serve the same area, there shall be the closest practicable coordination between the centres.

2.2 Search and rescue regions

- 2.2.1 Search and rescue region shall be established and delineated to ensure provision of adequate communication infrastructure, efficient distress alert routing and proper operational coordination to effectively support search and rescue services. Such regions shall not overlap, and neighbouring regions shall be contiguous.
- 2.2.2 Search and Rescue Region of Maldives should, in so far as practicable, be coincident with the Maldives Flight Information Region.

2.3 Rescue Coordination Centres and Rescue Sub-Centres

- 2.3.1 A Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) and, if required, Rescue Sub Centres (RSC) shall be established in the Search and Rescue Region of Maldives.
- 2.3.2 (Reserved).
- 2.3.3 The Rescue Coordination Centre and, as appropriate, Rescue Sub Centres, shall be staffed 24 hours a day by trained personnel proficient in the use of the language used for radio-telephony communications.
- 2.3.4 Rescue Coordination Centre personnel involved in the conduct of radiotelephony communications shall be proficient in the use of the English language.
- 2.3.5 Where public telecommunications facilities do not permit persons observing an aircraft in an emergency to notify the RCC concerned directly and promptly, the nearest police station shall be notified.
- 2.3.6 Rescue Coordination Centre and, as appropriate, rescue subcentre shall maintain up-to-date contact details in the OPS Control Directory.
- 2.3.7 Rescue coordination centre and, as appropriate, rescue subcentre shall subscribe and maintain access to the location of an aircraft in distress repository (LADR).

2.4 Search and Rescue Communications

- 2.4.1 Rescue Coordination Centre shall have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with:
- (a) associated air traffic services units;
 - (b) associated rescue subcentres;
 - (c) appropriate direction-finding and position-fixing stations;
 - (d) where appropriate, coastal radio stations capable of alerting and communicating with surface vessels in the region;
 - (e) the headquarters of search and rescue units in the region;
 - (f) all maritime RCCs in the region and aeronautical, maritime or joint rescue coordination centres in adjacent regions;
 - (g) a designated meteorological office or meteorological watch office;
 - (h) search and rescue units;
 - (i) alerting posts; and
 - (j) the COSPAS-SARSAT Mission Control Centre servicing the search and rescue region.
- 2.4.2 Rescue sub-centre, where provided, shall have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with:
- (a) adjacent rescue sub-centres;
 - (b) a meteorological office or meteorological watch office;

- (c) search and rescue units; and
- (d) alerting posts

2.5 Search and Rescue units

- 2.5.1 The Search and Rescue service provider shall designate as search and rescue units elements of public or private services suitably located and equipped for search and rescue operations and shall establish arrangements for the provision of search and rescue services with each search and rescue unit.
- 2.5.2 Search and Rescue Service Provider as part of the search and rescue plan of operation shall establish arrangements with public or private services that do not qualify as search and rescue units but are nevertheless able to participate in search and rescue operations.

2.6 Search and Rescue Equipment

- 2.6.1 Search and rescue units shall be provided with equipment for locating promptly, and for providing adequate assistance at, the scene of an accident.
- 2.6.2 Each search and rescue unit should have means of rapid and reliable two-way communication with other search and rescue facilities engaged in the same operation.
- 2.6.3 Each search and rescue aircraft shall be equipped, to be able to communicate on the aeronautical distress and on-scene frequencies and on such other frequencies as may be prescribed.
- 2.6.4 Each search and rescue aircraft shall be equipped with a device for homing on distress frequencies.
- 2.6.5 Each search and rescue aircraft shall be equipped to be able to communicate with vessels when used for search and rescue over maritime areas,.
- 2.6.6 Each search and rescue aircraft, when used for search and rescue over maritime areas shall carry a copy of the International Code of Signals to enable it to overcome language difficulties that may be experienced in communicating with vessels.
- 2.6.7 Unless it is known that there is no need to provide supplies to survivors by air, at least one of the aircraft participating in a search and rescue operation should carry droppable survival equipment.
- 2.6.8 Survival equipment should be located at international aerodromes, suitably packed for dropping by aircraft.
- 2.6.9 *As of 26 November 2026*, each search and rescue aircraft, when used for search and rescue over maritime areas, should carry a droppable device for measuring actual surface drift.

2.7 Search and rescue operations manual

- 2.7.1 The Search and Rescue provider shall establish and maintain a search and rescue operations manual, which demonstrates the means and methods for ensuring continuous compliance with the requirements in this Manual.
- 2.7.2 The operations manual established for the purposes of sub-paragraph (2.7.1) must include the following —
- (a) a job description of each search and rescue personnel which must contain the job function and responsibilities;
 - (b) the procedures necessary to ensure compliance with this regulation;
 - (c) the procedures to control, amend and distribute the operations manual, including the distribution of the initial and all subsequent amendments made to the operations manual.
- 2.7.3 The search and rescue provider shall notify the ANS Regulator of any changes made to the operations manual in a timely manner.
- 2.7.4 The search and rescue provider shall ensure that the operations manual is readily available to all personnel concerned with search and rescue.
- 2.7.5 The search and rescue provider shall ensure that the operations manual being used by all search and rescue personnel contains current information.
- 2.7.6 The search and rescue provider shall submit a copy of the current version of the operations manual to the ANS Regulator.
- 2.7.7 The search and rescue provider shall update, amend or add to the operations manual as the ANS Regulator may require to ensure:
- (a) the accuracy of the operations manual; and
 - (b) the safety, efficiency or regularity of air navigation.

CHAPTER 3 COOPERATION

3.1 Cooperation between States

- 3.1.1 Search and Rescue provider of Maldives in coordination with CAA shall establish arrangements to coordinate with those of neighbouring States.
- 3.1.2 Whenever necessary, the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) shall coordinate its search and rescue operations with those of neighbouring States' especially when these operations are proximate to adjacent search and rescue regions.
- 3.1.2.1 RCC shall, in so far as practicable, develop common search and rescue plans and procedures to facilitate coordination of search and rescue operations with those of neighbouring States.
- 3.1.3 Subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, the Chief Executive shall permit entry into its territory of search and rescue units of other States for the purpose of searching for the site of aircraft accidents and rescuing survivors of such accidents.
- 3.1.4 For the purpose of search and rescue, the Search and Rescue providers of Maldives who wish their search and rescue units to enter the territory of another state shall transmit a request, giving full details of the projected mission and the need for it, to the concerned authority as has been designated by that state.
- 3.1.4.1 When such a request is received from another State the authorities of the Maldives shall:
- (a) Immediately acknowledge the receipt of such a request, and
 - (b) as soon as possible, indicate the conditions, if any, under which the projected mission may be undertaken.
- 3.1.5 The Search and Rescue providers in coordination with CAA shall enter into agreements with neighbouring States to strengthen cooperation and coordination in search and rescue operations, outlining the conditions for entry of each other's search and rescue units into their respective territories. These agreements shall also provide for expediting entry of such units with the least possible formalities.
- 3.1.6 The Search and Rescue providers shall authorize its RCCs to:
- (a) request from other RCCs such assistance, including aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment, as may be needed;
 - (b) grant any necessary permission for the entry of such aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment into its territory; and
 - (c) make the necessary arrangements with the appropriate customs, immigration or other authorities with a view to expediting such entry.
- 3.1.7 The Search and Rescue providers shall make necessary arrangements to provide, when requested, assistance to other RCCs, including assistance in the form of aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment.
- 3.1.8 *Until 25 November 2026*, The Search and Rescue providers shall make arrangements

for joint training exercises involving their search and rescue units, those of other States and operators, in order to promote search and rescue efficiency.

As of 26 November 2026, The Search and Rescue providers shall make arrangements for joint training exercises involving their RCCs, RSCs, and search and rescue units, those of other States and operators, in order to promote search and rescue efficiency

- 3.1.9 The Search and Rescue providers shall make arrangements for periodic liaison visits by personnel of their RCC and sub-centres to the centres of neighbouring States

3.2 Cooperation with other services

- 3.2.1 The Search and Rescue providers shall make arrangements for all aircraft, vessels and local services and facilities which do not form part of the search and rescue organization to cooperate fully with the latter in search and rescue and extend any possible assistance to the survivors of aircraft accidents.

- 3.2.2 Search and Rescue providers shall ensure the closest practicable coordination between the aeronautical and maritime RCCs to provide for the most effective and efficient search and rescue services.

- 3.2.3 Search and Rescue providers shall cooperate with those responsible for investigating accidents and with those responsible for the care of those who suffered from the accident.

- 3.2.4 To facilitate accident investigation, rescue units shall, when practicable, be accompanied by persons qualified in the conduct of aircraft accident investigations.

- 3.2.5 *Until 25 November 2026*, Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre is designated as the search and rescue point of contact for the receipt of COSPAS-SARSAT distress data.

As of 26 November 2026, Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre is designated as the 24-hour search and rescue point of contact available for the receipt and acknowledgement of COSPAS-SARSAT distress alert data that ensures timely notification to the responsible RCC for the initiation of appropriate search and rescue response action.

3.3 Dissemination of information

- 3.3.1 Information necessary for the entry of search and rescue units of other States into Maldives shall be published in the Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) of Maldives, and this information shall be included in Search and Rescue Service Agreements.

- 3.3.2 When such information could benefit the provision of search and rescue services, the organizations responsible shall make available, through the RCCs or other agencies, information regarding their search and rescue plans of operation.

- 3.3.3 The information regarding actions to be taken when there is reason to believe that an aircraft's emergency situation may become cause for public concern or require a general emergency response shall be disseminated to the general public and emergency response authorities, to the extent desirable and practicable.

CHAPTER 4 PREPARATORY MEASURES

4.1 Preparatory information

- 4.1.1 Each Rescue Coordination Centre shall have readily available at all times up-to-date information concerning the following in respect of its Search and Rescue Region:
- (a) search and rescue units, rescue sub-centres and alerting posts;
 - (b) air traffic services units;
 - (c) means of communication that may be used in search and rescue operations;
 - (d) addresses and telephone numbers of all operators, or their designated representatives, engaged in operations in the region; and
 - (e) any other public and private resources including medical and transportation facilities that are likely to be useful in search and rescue.
- 4.1.2 Each RCC shall have readily available all other information of interest to search and rescue, including information regarding:
- (a) the locations, call signs, hours of watch, and frequencies of all radio stations likely to be employed in support of search and rescue operations;
 - (b) the locations and hours of watch of services keeping radio watch, and the frequencies guarded;
 - (c) locations where supplies of droppable emergency and survival equipment are stored; and
 - (d) objects which it is known might be mistaken for unallocated or unreported wreckage, particularly if viewed from the air.
 - (e) *as of 26 November 2026*, the position, course and speed of aircraft that may be able to provide assistance to aircraft in distress; and
 - (f) *as of 26 November 2026*, where the search and rescue region includes maritime areas, the position, course and speed of ships that may be able to provide assistance to aircraft in distress.
- 4.1.3 *Until 25 November 2026*, Each RCC whose Search and Rescue Region includes maritime areas shall have ready access to information regarding the position, course and speed of ships within such areas that may be able to provide assistance to aircraft in distress and information on how to contact them.
- Note – This information may either be kept in the RCCs or be readily accessible.*
- Paragraph 4.1.3 and the accompanying Note will be deleted as of 26 November 2026.*
- 4.1.4 MRCC shall, individually or in cooperation with other States, either establish ship reporting systems in cooperation with maritime authorities or arrange communication links with AMVER or regional ship reporting systems to facilitate search and rescue operations at sea.

4.2 Plans of operation

- 4.2.1 Each RCC shall prepare detailed plans of operation for the conduct of Search and Rescue operations within the Search and Rescue Region of Maldives.
- 4.2.2 Search and Rescue Plans of operations shall, where practical, be developed jointly with representatives of the operators and other agencies that may assist in providing search and rescue services or benefit from them, taking into account that the number of survivors could be large.
- 4.2.3 The plans of operation shall specify arrangements for the servicing and refuelling, to the extent possible, of aircraft, vessels and vehicles employed in search and rescue operations, including those made available by other States.
- 4.2.4 The search and rescue plans of operation shall contain details regarding actions to be taken by those persons engaged in search and rescue, including:
- (a) the manner in which search and rescue operations are to be conducted in the search and rescue region;
 - (b) the use of available communication systems and facilities;
 - (c) the actions to be taken jointly with other RCCs;
 - (d) the methods of alerting en-route aircraft and ships at sea;
 - (e) the duties and prerogatives of persons assigned to search and rescue;
 - (f) the possible redeployment of equipment that may be necessitated by meteorological or other conditions;
 - (g) the methods for obtaining essential information relevant to search and rescue operations, such as weather reports and forecasts, appropriate NOTAM, etc.;
 - (h) the methods for obtaining, from other RCCs, such assistance, including aircraft, vessels, persons or equipment, as may be needed;
 - (i) *until 25 November 2026*, the methods for assisting distressed aircraft being compelled to ditch to rendezvous with surface craft;
as of 26 November 2026, the methods for obtaining approval to allow search and rescue units from an assisting State to enter into the territory of the State of the RCC;
 - (j) *until 25 November 2026*, the methods for assisting search and rescue or other aircraft to proceed to aircraft in distress;
as of 26 November 2026, the methods for assisting distressed aircraft being compelled to ditch to rendezvous with surface craft;
 - (k) *until 25 November 2026*, cooperative actions to be taken in conjunction with air traffic services units and other authorities concerned to assist aircraft known or believed to be subject to unlawful interference.
as of 26 November 2026, the methods for assisting search and rescue or other aircraft to proceed to aircraft in distress; and
 - (l) *as of 26 November 2026*, cooperative actions to be taken in conjunction with air traffic services units and other authorities concerned to assist aircraft known or believed to be subject to unlawful interference.

- 4.2.5 Search and rescue plans of operation shall be integrated with airport emergency plans to provide for rescue services in the vicinity of aerodromes and water aerodromes.

4.3 Search and Rescue Units

- 4.3.1 Each search and rescue unit shall:

- (a) be cognizant of all parts of the plans of operation prescribed in 4.2 that are necessary for the effective conduct of its duties; and
- (b) keep the RCC informed of its preparedness.

- 4.3.2 Each search and rescue unit shall:

- (a) maintain in readiness the required number of search and rescue facilities; and
- (b) maintain adequate supplies of rations, medical stores, signalling devices and other survival and rescue equipment.

4.4 Training and exercises

- 4.4.1 *Until 25 November 2026*, To achieve and maintain maximum efficiency in Search and Rescue Services the Search and Rescue providers shall provide regular training to its search and rescue personnel. Appropriate search and rescue exercises shall also be arranged for such personnel.

As of 26 November 2026, To achieve and maintain maximum efficiency in Search and Rescue Services the Search and Rescue providers shall provide regular training and exercise to its search and rescue personnel, which include both land and maritime environments as appropriate, containing both search and rescue elements, remote from an aerodrome.

- 4.4.2 The training in aeronautical search and rescue provided by the Search and Rescue providers shall consist of theoretical and practical knowledge of aeronautical search and rescue operations.
- 4.4.3 Search and Rescue providers shall ensure that its search and rescue personnel maintain their competency by undergoing refresher training that includes knowledge about updates of ICAO provisions and other provisions pertaining to search and rescue as well as maintain training records for its personnel.

4.5 Wreckage (Applicable until 25 November 2026)

Wreckage resulting from aircraft accidents within the Maldivian Territory including territorial waters or, in the case of accidents on the high seas or in areas of undetermined sovereignty, falling within the search and rescue region of Maldives shall be removed, obliterated or charted following completion of the accident investigation, if its presence might constitute a hazard or confuse subsequent Search and Rescue operations.

Accident sites and wreckage (Applicable as of 26 November 2026)

- 4.5.1 The Search and Rescue providers shall ensure that search and rescue personnel that may be required to respond to an aircraft accident site are trained in the management of related occupational health risks.

- 4.5.2 Wreckage resulting from aircraft accidents within the Maldivian Territory including territorial waters or, in the case of accidents on the high seas or in areas of undetermined sovereignty, falling within the search and rescue region of Maldives shall be removed, obliterated or charted following completion of the accident investigation, if its presence might constitute a hazard or confuse subsequent Search and Rescue operations.

CHAPTER 5 OPERATING PROCEDURES

5.1 Information concerning emergencies

- 5.1.1 Any authority or any element of the search and rescue organization having reason to believe that an aircraft is in an emergency shall give immediately all available information to the RCC concerned.
- 5.1.2 Rescue Coordination Centres shall, immediately upon receipt of information concerning aircraft in emergency, evaluate such information and assess the extent of the operation required.
- 5.1.3 When information concerning aircraft in emergency is received from sources other than air traffic services units, the RCC shall determine to which emergency phase the situation corresponds and shall apply the procedures applicable to that phase.

5.2 Procedures for rescue coordination centres during emergency phases

5.2.1 Uncertainty phase

Upon the occurrence of an uncertainty phase, the RCC shall cooperate to the utmost with air traffic services units and other appropriate agencies and services in order that incoming reports may be speedily evaluated.

5.2.2 Alert phase

Upon the occurrence of an alert phase the RCC shall immediately alert search and rescue units and initiate any necessary action.

5.2.3 Distress phase

Upon the occurrence of a distress phase, the RCC shall:

- (a) immediately initiate action by search and rescue units in accordance with the appropriate plan of operation;
- (b) ascertain the position of the aircraft, estimate the degree of uncertainty of this position, and, on the basis of this information and the circumstances, determine the extent of the area to be searched;
- (c) notify the operator, where possible, and keep the operator informed of developments;
- (d) notify other RCCs, the help of which seems likely to be required, or which may be concerned in the operation;
- (e) notify the associated air traffic services unit, when the information on the emergency has been received from another source;
- (f) request at an early stage such aircraft, vessels, coastal stations and other services not specifically included in the appropriate plan of operation and able to assist to:
 - 1. maintain a listening watch for transmissions from the aircraft in distress, survival radio equipment or an Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT);
 - 2. assist the aircraft in distress as far as practicable; and

3. inform the RCC of any developments;

- (g) from the information available, draw up a detailed plan of action for the conduct of the search and/or rescue operation required and communicate such plan for the guidance of the authorities immediately directing the conduct of such an operation;
- (h) amend as necessary, in the light of evolving circumstances, the detailed plan of action;
- (i) notify the appropriate accident investigation authorities; and
- (j) notify the State of Registry of the aircraft.

The order in which these actions are described shall be followed unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

5.2.4 Initiation of search and rescue action in respect of an aircraft whose position is unknown

In the event that an emergency phase is declared in respect of an aircraft whose position is unknown and may be in one of two or more search and rescue regions, the following shall apply:

- (a) When a RCC is notified of the existence of an emergency phase and is unaware of other centres taking appropriate action, it shall assume responsibility for initiating suitable action in accordance with 5.2 and confer with neighboring RCCs with the objective of designating one RCC to assume responsibility forthwith.
- (b) Unless otherwise decided by common agreement of the RCCs concerned, the RCC to coordinate search and rescue action shall be the centre responsible for:
 - the region in which the aircraft last reported its position; or
 - the region to which the aircraft was proceeding when its last reported position was on the line separating two search and rescue regions; or
 - the region to which the aircraft was destined when it was not equipped with suitable two-way radio communication or not under obligation to maintain radio communication; or
 - the region in which the distress site is located as identified by the COSPAS-SARSAT system.
- (c) After declaration of the distress phase, the RCC with overall coordination responsibility shall inform all RCCs that may become involved in the operation of all the circumstances of the emergency and subsequent developments. Likewise, all RCCs becoming aware of any information pertaining to the emergency shall inform the RCC that has overall responsibility.

5.2.5 Passing of information to aircraft in respect of which an emergency phase has been declared

Whenever applicable, the RCC responsible for search and rescue action shall forward to the air traffic services unit serving the flight information region in which the aircraft is operating, information of the search and rescue action initiated, in order that such information can be passed to the aircraft.

5.3 Procedures where responsibility for operations extends to two or more Contracting States

Where the conduct of operations over the entire search and rescue region is the responsibility of more than one Contracting State, each involved State shall take action in accordance with the relevant plan of operations when so requested by the RCC of the region.

5.4 Procedures for agencies in the field

The agencies immediately directing the conduct of operations or any part thereof shall:

- (a) give instructions to the units under their direction and inform the RCC of such instructions; and
- (b) keep the RCC informed of developments.

5.5 Procedures for Rescue Coordination Centre — Termination and suspension of operations

5.5.1 Search and rescue operations shall continue, when practicable until all survivors are delivered to a place of safety or until all reasonable hope of rescuing survivors has passed.

5.5.2 The responsible RCC shall normally be responsible for determining when to discontinue search and rescue operations.

Note: - Responsible RCC may require input from other appropriate State Authorities in the decision-making process leading to termination of SAR operations.

5.5.3 When a search and rescue operation has been successful or when a RCC considers, or is informed, that an emergency no longer exists, the emergency phase shall be cancelled, the search and rescue operation shall be terminated and any agency, facility or service that has been activated or notified shall be promptly informed.

5.5.4 If a search and rescue operation becomes impracticable and the RCC concludes that there might still be survivors, the centre shall temporarily suspend on-scene activities pending further developments and shall promptly inform any agency, facility or service which has been activated or notified. Relevant information subsequently received shall be evaluated and search and rescue operations resumed when justified and practicable.

5.6 Procedures at the scene of an accident

Note: - As of 26 November 2026, section 5.6 will be titled: 5.6 Procedures at the distress scene

5.6.1 When multiple agencies/ facilities are engaged in search and rescue operations on-scene, the RCC or rescue sub-centre shall designate one or more units on-scene to

coordinate all actions to help ensure the safety and effectiveness of air and surface operations, taking into account facility capabilities and operational requirements.

5.6.2 When a pilot-in-command observes that either another aircraft or a surface craft is in distress, the pilot shall, if possible and unless considered unreasonable or unnecessary:

- (a) keep the craft in distress in sight until compelled to leave the scene or advised by the RCC that it is no longer necessary;
- (b) determine the position of the craft in distress;
- (c) as appropriate, report to the RCC or air traffic services unit as much of the following information as possible:

- type of craft in distress, its identification and condition;
- its position, expressed in geographical or grid co-ordinates or in distance and true bearing from a distinctive landmark or from a radio navigation aid;
- time of observation expressed in hours and minutes Coordinated Universal Time (UTC);
- number of persons observed;
- whether persons have been seen to abandon the craft in distress;
- *as of 26 November 2026*, whether any distress signals, including distress beacon transmissions, have been received or observed;
- on-scene weather conditions;
- apparent physical condition of survivors;
- until 25 November 2026, apparent best ground access route to the distress site; and
- *as of 26 November 2026*, apparent best ground access route to the distress scene;
- *as of 26 November 2026*, position and description of any other craft in the area that may assist; and

- (d) act as instructed by the RCC or the air traffic services unit.

5.6.2.1 *Until 25 November 2026*, If the first aircraft to reach the scene of an accident is not a search and rescue aircraft, it shall take charge of on-scene activities of all other aircraft subsequently arriving until the first search and rescue aircraft reaches the scene of the accident. If, in the meantime, such aircraft is unable to establish communication with the appropriate RCC or air traffic services unit, it shall, by mutual agreement,

hand over to an aircraft capable of establishing and maintaining such communications until the arrival of the first search and rescue aircraft.

As of 26 November 2026, if the first aircraft to reach the distress scene is not a search and rescue aircraft, it shall take charge of on-scene activities of all other aircraft subsequently arriving until the first search and rescue aircraft reaches the distress scene. If, in the meantime, such aircraft is unable to establish communication with the appropriate rescue coordination centre or air traffic services unit, it shall, by mutual agreement, hand over to an aircraft capable of establishing and maintaining such communications until the arrival of the first search and rescue aircraft.

- 5.6.3 When it is necessary for an aircraft to convey information to survivors or surface rescue units, and two-way communication is not available, it shall, if practicable, drop communication equipment that would enable direct contact to be established, or convey the information by dropping a hard copy message.
- 5.6.4 When a ground signal has been displayed, the aircraft shall indicate whether the signal has been understood or not by the means described in 5.6.3 or, if this is not practicable, by making the appropriate visual signal.
- 5.6.5 When it is necessary for an aircraft to direct a surface craft to the place where an aircraft or surface craft is in distress, the aircraft shall do so by transmitting precise instructions by any means at its disposal. If no radio communication can be established, the aircraft shall make the appropriate visual signal.
- 5.6.6 *As of 26 November 2026*, when carrying a device for measuring actual surface drift in accordance with 2.6.9, a search and rescue aircraft shall drop the device as soon as it reaches the scene of an accident.

5.7 Procedures for a pilot-in-command intercepting a distress transmission

- 5.7.1 Whenever a distress transmission is intercepted by a pilot-in-command of an aircraft, the pilot shall, if feasible:
- (a) acknowledge the distress transmission;
 - (b) record the position of the craft in distress if given;
 - (c) take a bearing on the transmission;
 - (d) inform the appropriate RCC or air traffic services unit of the distress transmission, giving all available information;
 - (e) *Until 25 November 2026*, at the pilot's discretion, while awaiting instructions, proceed to the position given in the transmission: *As of 26 November 2026*, at the pilot's discretion, while awaiting instructions, proceed to the distress position
 - (f) *As of 26 November 2026*, attempt to establish communications with the person(s) in distress.
- 5.7.2 *As of 26 November 2026*, whenever a pilot monitors 121.5 MHz, and intercepts a transmission from a distress beacon, the pilot shall also:

- (a) record, and report as soon as possible, the position where the transmission was first received;
- (b) not alter any settings for squelch on the aircraft's radio; and
- (c) if feasible, continue to monitor the frequency until such time as the signal ceases, and inform the appropriate rescue coordination centre or air traffic services unit of such.

5.8 Search and rescue signals

- 5.8.1 The air-to-surface and surface-to-air visual signals in the Appendix shall, when used, have the meaning indicated therein. They shall be used only for the purpose indicated and no other signals likely to be confused with them shall be used.
- 5.8.2 Upon observing any of the signals in Appendix, aircraft shall take such action as may be required by the interpretation of the signal given in that Appendix.

5.9 Maintenance of records

- 5.9.1 Each RCC shall keep a record of the operational efficiency of the search and rescue organization in its region.
- 5.9.2 Each RCC shall prepare appraisals of actual search and rescue operations in its region. These appraisals shall comprise any pertinent remarks on the procedures used and on the emergency and survival equipment, and any suggestions for improvement of those procedures and equipment. Those appraisals, which are likely to be of interest to other States, shall be submitted to ICAO for information and dissemination, as appropriate.

APPENDIX 1 SEARCH AND RESCUE SIGNALS

(Note – See Para 5, 5.8 of this MCAR)

1 Signals with surface craft

1.1 The following manoeuvres performed in sequence by an aircraft mean that the aircraft wishes to direct a surface craft towards an aircraft or a surface craft in distress:

- (a) circling the surface craft at least once;
- (b) crossing the projected course of the surface craft close ahead at low altitude and:
 - 1. rocking the wings; or
 - 2. opening and closing the throttle; or
 - 3. changing the propeller pitch.

Note – Due to high noise level on board surface craft, the sound signals in 2. and 3. may be less effective than the visual signal in 1. and are regarded as alternative means of attracting attention.

- (c) heading in the direction in which the surface craft is to be directed.

Repetition of such manoeuvres has the same meaning.

1.2 The following manoeuvres by an aircraft means that the assistance of the surface craft to which the signal is directed is no longer required:

- crossing the wake of the surface craft close astern at a low altitude and:
 - 1. rocking the wings; or
 - 2. opening and closing the throttle; or
 - 3. changing the propeller pitch.

Note – The following replies may be made by surface craft to the signal in 1.1:

- *for acknowledging receipt of signals:*
 - 1. *the hoisting of the “code pennant” (vertical red and white stripes) close up (meaning understood);*
 - 2. *the flashing of a succession of “T’s” by signal lamp in the Morse code;*
 - 3. *the changing of heading to follow the aircraft.*
- *for indicating inability to comply:*
 - 1. *the hoisting of the international flag “N” (a blue and white checkered square);*
 - 2. *the flashing of a succession of “N’s” in the Morse code.*

Note – See Note following 1.1 b), 3.

2 Ground-air visual signal code

2.1 Ground-air visual signal code for use by survivors

No.	Message	Code symbol
1	Require assistance	V
2	Require medical assistance	X
3	No or Negative	N
4	Yes or Affirmative	Y
5	Proceeding in this direction	↑

2.2 Ground-air visual signal code for use by rescue units

No.	Message	Code symbol
1	Operation completed	LLL
2	We have found all personnel	<u>LL</u>
3	We have found only some personnel	++
4	We are not able to continue. Returning to base	XX
5	Have divided into two groups. Each proceeding in direction indicated	↗↘
6	Information received that aircraft is in this direction	→ →
7	Nothing found. Will continue to search	NN

2.3 Symbols shall be at least 2.5 metres (8 feet) long and shall be made as conspicuous as possible.

Note 1 – Symbols may be formed by any means such as: strips of fabric, parachute material, pieces of wood, stones or such like material; marking the surface by tramping, or staining with oil.

Note 2 – Attention to the above signals may be attracted by other means such as radio, flares, smoke and reflected light.

3 Air-to-ground signals

3.1 The following signals by aircraft mean that the ground signals have been understood:

- (a) during the hours of daylight:
 - by rocking the aircraft's wings;
- (b) during the hours of darkness:
 - flashing on and off twice the aircraft's landing lights or, if not so equipped, by switching on and off twice its navigation lights.

3.2 Lack of the above signal indicates that the ground signal is not understood.