



12.1 Watchkeeping

Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	2
HIERARCHY OF OBSERVATION.....	2
HIERARCHY OF VULNERABILITY.....	2
SUPPLEMENTARY READING	2
VISUAL SCANNING.....	3
WATCHKEEPING BEST PRACTICE	3
Before going on Watch.....	3
Before entering the Station.....	3
At the start of the first Watch of the day.....	4
Watch handover.....	4
Closing the Station	5
SOLO WATCHES.....	5
WHEN DFS CAPABILITY IS AFFECTED.....	5



12.1 Watchkeeping

INTRODUCTION

1. The primary function of all NCI Watchkeepers is to provide continuous surveillance in order to spot any vessel or person in difficulty or at risk, whether on land or at sea, and immediately report the essential facts to HMCG.

HIERARCHY OF OBSERVATION

2. Successful surveillance is achieved using the following hierarchy:
 - scanning with your eyes – they have a greater width and depth of vision, followed by using:
 - optical equipment – binoculars, telescopes, CCTV, and
 - electronic aids – radar, AIS
 - monitoring VHF radio messages – for traffic or persons in the area or developing emergencies

HIERARCHY OF VULNERABILITY

3. An approach for prioritising potential targets.
 - *All incidents occurring within the Watch sector:*
 - Mayday, PanPan – distress and urgency signals seen or heard
 - casualty at sea – vessels/people in difficulty
 - beach incidents – injuries; missing persons; people in difficulty; munitions; containers with hazardous contents
 - significant floating debris/life rafts or equipment
 - suspicious activities – possible drugs or people smuggling
 - illegal diving on historic sites
 - sightings of dolphins, porpoises and other cetaceans
 - deceased marine mammals and sea birds (five or more)
 - *Vulnerable craft and people*
 - all persons in/on the water (including cave explorers)
 - small craft/inflatables, leisure craft users
 - children, scramblers, climbers, coastal path walkers
 - vulnerable adults, disabled persons
 - injured marine mammals, birds, other animals

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

4. In order to undertake Watchkeeping effectively and consistently, all Watchkeepers must be familiar with:
 - ✓ Safeguarding – Section 10.1
 - ✓ Logbooks – Section 12.2
 - ✓ Incident Reporting – Section 12.3A and 12.3B
 - ✓ Radio Communications – Sections 12.4A, 12.4B and 12.4C
 - ✓ Weather – Section 12.6
 - ✓ Tides – Section 12.7



12.1 Watchkeeping

- ✓ Chartwork – Sections 12.8A and 12.8B
- ✓ Lost and Found Children – Section 12.10

VISUAL SCANNING

5. The level of concentration required to guarantee constant vigilance is best achieved by ensuring that you have regular 'panorama' changes between Watchkeepers.
6. The following principles assist in maintaining an effective visual lookout:
 - **A Fleeting Glimpse** – if you think you have seen something, you are probably correct. Always look again, taking sufficient time to check thoroughly
 - **Be methodical, sweep routinely, sweep slowly** – surveillance must be systematic, whether you observe from 'out to in' (horizon to Station) or the reverse, and whichever pattern you choose it should provide some overlap to avoid gaps
 - **Mark and lock on to the target** – it is imperative that you keep the target in view at all times especially in rough seas. This is achieved by:
 - informing any other Watchkeepers in the Station of the target, who must confirm they also have visual contact
 - your colleague taking notes on plain paper (for later transfer to the Station Logbook), and who phones the details through to HMCG
 - where there is CCTV, directing it onto the target and recording the pictures so that evidence is available for any later enquiry
 - using the Pelorus to obtain a bearing
 - when binoculars are needed, keep your eyes fixed on the target bringing the binoculars up to your eyes, as this will help keep it in your line of sight

WATCHKEEPING BEST PRACTICE

7. While each NCI Station will develop practices appropriate to local conditions there are overarching systems and routines which must be used to deliver a nationally recognised, consistent, professional and effective service:

Before going on Watch

- Update yourself regarding weather, inshore waters forecasts and tide times
- Arrive at the Station before opening time to undertake start-up procedure or allow for handover from previous Watch

Before entering the Station

- Undertake visual check outside the Station for signs of damage or break-in; call the police and do not enter if criminal damage, burglary or vandalism is suspected
- Check beach and area outside the Station for anything untoward
- Note weather, sea state and presence of craft and people



12.1 Watchkeeping

At the start of the first Watch of the day

- Enter names of Watchkeepers on duty and watch times on a new page in the Station Logbook, adding initials against names
- Record time and 'On Watch'
- Update yourself regarding weather, inshore waters forecasts and tide times and enter in Logbook (before you inform HMCG that you are logging on)
- Check that all equipment is functioning correctly
- Carry out optical sweep
- Raise flags as appropriate for the date
- Inform HMCG that the Station is logging on and what time the Station will close that day. A suggested form of words when logging on with HMCG :

"THIS IS XXX NCI. We are now on watch until sunset/closing time XXXX hours UTC/BST today. Would you like to know our local weather conditions?"

Provide if the answer is affirmative.

Watch handover

- The following mnemonic ICELAWS is a reminder of the formal briefing process to be followed:

I	Incidents	Details of any incidents that have occurred during the Watch or are still ongoing.
C	Concerns	Point out any people, craft or situations that are causing concern
E	Equipment	Report failures, breakages and/or defective equipment
L	Log	Vessels and events that have been logged and the reasons
A	Advisory notices and messages	Draw attention to new Station notices, and any housekeeping issues
W	Weather	A description of the current and forecast weather including wind warnings, sea state and tides
S	Summary and sign off	With the briefing complete, the Station Logbook must be filled in and 'Off Watch' along with the time of the handover recorded. Oncoming Watchkeepers' names are noted. A line is drawn under this entry.

In addition, the following tasks are completed by Watchkeepers taking over a Watch:

- Enter names of Watchkeepers coming on duty and Watch times in the Station Logbook, adding initials against names
- Record time and 'On Watch'; this time must be the same as the time the previous Watch logged off
- Check that all equipment is functioning correctly
- Complete a weather observation record in the Logbook and the times of all the tides occurring on that day, with the appropriate 'spring' or 'neap' tide box ticked
- A detailed observation of the area should be commenced, recording vessels and events in the Logbook



12.1 Watchkeeping

Closing the Station

- A final check must be made of the entire view from the Station, noting anything that must be passed on to HMCG when logging off
- Complete a weather observation record in the Logbook
- Remove any information external to the Station (such as tide information board)
- Lower flags in the reverse order they were raised
- Switch off equipment as agreed locally
- Stow portable equipment safely and out of sight
- Inform HMCG that the Station is logging off and update with any items of interest that have occurred during the day. A suggested form of words is:

“THIS IS XXX NCI. We are letting you know that we are going off Watch now until opening time XXXX hours UTC/BST tomorrow. Would you like to know our local weather conditions?”

SOLO WATCHES

8. Multi-person watches are the preferred option for safety reasons, but one-person Watches cannot always be avoided; however only certificated Watchkeepers who are qualified RYA SRC radio operators (or approved equivalent) may undertake solo watches
9. If you are ever a Solo Watchkeeper, you must:
 - wear your lone worker alarm pendant, where provided
 - make buddy calls, as arranged locally, to confirm all is well
 - inform a responsible person (partner, friend, other Watchkeeper) if you have a medical condition
 - let someone (partner, friend, Station Manager, other Watchkeeper) know before leaving the Station and, if your parking area is remote from the Station, again when in your vehicle
10. If a solo Watchkeeper fails to answer or does not make the agreed regular check and all attempts to make contact are futile, then seek HMCG and police assistance.

WHEN DFS CAPABILITY IS AFFECTED

11. HMCG must be informed straightaway when your Station will be unexpectedly closed, or a particular Watch is going to be unmanned.
12. Similarly, inform HMCG when there is equipment failure, landline failure, an accident or a problem that forces premature closure of the Station.