Department of Transportation

United States Coast Guard

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NAVIGATION AND VESSEL INSPECTION CIRCULAR NO. 1-97

Subj: SHIPBOARD SAFETY MANAGEMENT AND CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR PASSENGER VESSELS
Electronic Version For Distribution Via the World Wide Web

1. PURPOSE. This Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) provides guidance on preparing a Shipboard Safety Management and Contingency Plan (hereafter referred to as the "plan") under 46 CFR 199.630(f) as an alternative to the survival craft requirements under 46 CFR 199.201(b). This alternative applies to passenger vessels operating on routes that are not subject to the requirements of the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) to which subchapter W in 46 CFR chapter I applies. In addition, this guidance may be helpful to operators that wish to prepare a shipboard safety management and contingency plan to augment their existing safety program.

2. ACTION.

   a. The Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI) shall bring enclosure (1) to the attention of appropriate individuals in the marine industry within their zones.

   b. The cognizant OCMI shall verify the effectiveness of the shipboard safety management and contingency plan if the plan is submitted as an alternative to the requirements of 46 CFR 199.201(b).

   c. Owners and operators of passenger vessels are encouraged to review the guidance contained in enclosure (1) before preparing a shipboard safety management and contingency plan as an alternative to the survival craft requirements in 46 CFR 199.201(b).

3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None.

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4. BACKGROUND.

a. Recently there has been a dramatic increase in the number of inland and near coastal passenger vessel operations. Passenger vessels which have been traditionally used for transport of passengers and vehicles are now also involved in a wide variety of operations related to entertainment. Some of these vessels, although fully capable of navigation, do not normally leave the dock, other vessels operate over short distances in protected "moats," while still others operate on rivers with normally fast flowing currents. As a result, many of the assumptions made in developing certain safety regulations, may not be appropriate for passenger vessels operating in such services.

b. Subchapter W describes the lifesaving equipment requirements for passenger vessels. Because of the unique nature of some passenger vessel operations, subchapter W allows owners and operators to outfit their vessels with alternative lifesaving arrangements, if they provide a comprehensive shipboard safety and contingency plan. Developing a plan using the guidelines in enclosure (1) and having it approved by the cognizant OCMI, meets the requirements of 46 CFR 199.630(f).

5. DISCUSSION.

a. Good marine practice dictates that vessel owners and operators should have contingency plans in place to deal with medical emergencies, oil spills, vessel fires, collisions, and groundings. In preparing contingency plans, consideration should be given to the geographical area of operation, the environmental conditions, the proximity of other vessels and suitability of any onshore or offshore facilities. These plans should identify local fire, ambulance, and search and rescue facilities, including local telephone numbers and contact points. The plan should also address concerns associated with the above emergencies for both underway and dockside situations as appropriate and include provisions for company drills and crew training. Passengers should be instructed on safety issues before they get involved in the activities on board. The crew training program should be applicable to hotel and service personnel and include measures for crowd control.

b. The guidelines in enclosure (1) assist with the preparation of these plans. While developing the plans, consider the many variables that apply to the particular vessel for which the plan is developed. Some of these variables include type and size of vessel; number of passengers carried on board; shore based management structure; search and rescue facilities available; route of the vessel; and traffic and weather conditions.

c. The plan should be available to assist personnel in dealing with an emergency. Its primary purpose is to set in motion the necessary actions to end or minimize the effect of the emergency. Effective planning ensures that the necessary actions are taken in a structured, logical, and timely manner.

d. The need for a predetermined plan is clear when considering the pressures and multiple tasks facing personnel confronted with an emergency. During an emergency, effective planning will prevent confusion, mistakes, and failure to advise key people. Delays will be avoided and time will be used wisely.

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Chief, Marine Safety and
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Encl: (1) Guidelines for the Development of a Shipboard Safety Management and Contingency Plan for Passenger Vessels

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Guidelines for the Development of a Shipboard Safety Management and Contingency Plan for Passenger Vessels

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are to assist with the preparation of a Shipboard Safety Management and Contingency Plan (hereafter referred to as the "plan"). The plan provides procedures for handling emergencies that may occur on passenger vessels. Personnel may encounter medical emergencies, fires, groundings, collisions, and criminal acts including terrorism. Each emergency may require a different response involving different segments of the vessel's crew and shore teams.

A predetermined plan is necessary because of the multiple tasks that personnel may encounter in dealing with an emergency. During an emergency, it is important that passengers be aware of their environment, be informed of the vessel's design to handle emergencies; be informed that they are in safe and competent hands; and be prepared to follow directions.

2.0 PLAN CONTENT

A plan may take a lot of time, effort, and research to write, set up and make operational. Plan writing is also a continuous process. Keep the first iteration of the plan very simple. Avoid including extensive background information about the vessel, which is available elsewhere. Place relevant information in annexes where it will not lessen the ability of vessel's personnel to locate operative parts of the plan. As the plan becomes operational and is rehearsed, elements that were forgotten or overlooked, redundancies, and out-of-sequence steps will all become apparent. Conduct a complete debriefing and feedback session after each rehearsal to correct and refine the plan.

The plan should—

- Provide information to assist the vessel's master and crew in preparing to handle an emergency, and to take the necessary actions to stop or minimize damage and to mitigate the effects of an emergency.

- Be tailored for the particular vessel for which the plan is developed.

- Establish procedures to get passengers from various spaces on the vessel to an assembly station (stage 1 egress); direct them on to the embarkation stations (stage 2 egress); and evacuate them to points of safety (stage 3 egress) in an emergency.

- Describe the method and procedure for providing timely instructions to passengers.

- List external organizations that the plan holder would call for assistance in the event of each type of maritime incident. The organizations should be listed as key contacts on the plan and might include government agencies, fire departments, hospitals, vessel or

equipment providers, and contractors providing specialized services such as towing and barge services, and trained personnel related to control, triage, or recovery operations.

- Describe the different training that will be offered to prepare the crew to handle emergency situations. The training should include theoretical instruction and practical training through simulation of incidents so that the crew can rehearse and practice their roles.

- Be realistic, practical, and easy to use and understand by company personnel, both on board and ashore.

- Have a designated space to allow for recording "lessons learned" during a simulation exercise. Periodically incorporate the "lessons learned" into the plan to continuously improve it.

- Be reviewed, evaluated, exercised, and updated regularly.

- Be kept in a loose-leaf binder. This will allow information to be updated regularly as it becomes available.

- Have flow charts or checklists to guide personnel through the various actions and decisions required during an incident response. Checklists and flowcharts reduce oversight errors during emergency situations.

- Be readily available on board, located throughout the vessel so that crew members are aware of their responsibilities during an emergency situation.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Assembly Station

"Assembly station" means the space on board a vessel where passengers can be assembled in the event of an emergency, can be accounted for, given instructions, and prepared to abandon ship, if necessary. An assembly station is also known as a muster station, safe refuge area, or qualified refuge area.

3.2 Embarkation Station

"Embarkation station" means an area from where passengers are evacuated from the vessel to points of safety external to the vessel.

4.0 PREVENTION AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

4.1 Shipboard Safety Management Policies

Discuss the overall company and shipboard management policies in this section. Different companies will have different management structures and reporting hierarchies. Differences may also be due to the number and type of vessels owned by the company and their operating routes. However, even though management procedures and policies may be different, the objective of the plan must always be to mitigate the effects of a casualty and get passengers to safety in an emergency.

4.2 Onboard Training

Determine the level of training required for different members of the crew. Discuss how this training will be conducted. Crew members that have specific responsibilities during an emergency should be familiar with their position and role in an emergency. Crew members that do not have specific responsibilities during an emergency should have at least a basic familiarization of the vessel, and be aware of how and where to direct the passengers. Training may be conducted through training manuals and videos, supplemented by a series of practical, hands-on, and onboard training exercises.

4.3 Crew Duties and Responsibilities

Prepare a station bill or muster list for each emergency. Cite specific responsibilities for each individual position listed on the bill. As far as possible, an individual crew member's duties should not vary with different emergencies. Also list the duties and responsibilities of all individuals that are tasked to ensure that emergency equipment such as communication devices, fire extinguishing equipment, first aid kits, and lifesaving devices are always operational.

4.4 Safety Instructions to Passengers

Discuss how the following information will be provided to passengers:

- How the signal for an emergency will be given.
- How to proceed after hearing the emergency signal.
- How assistance will be provided to disabled persons in an emergency.
- How to recognize a crew member and follow instructions.
- How abandon-ship procedures will be carried out including moving to assembly stations, embarkation stations, and survival craft. Encourage passengers to look for the assembly stations so they learn that the point where they came aboard via the gangway is not necessarily the place to go in an emergency.

- How to don a lifejacket.
- How the evacuation system will be employed through the use of lifeboats, liferafts, chutes, or slides.
- How the boarding and launching procedures will be carried out.

This information should be provided in one or a combination of the three alternatives discussed below.

Video Presentation

This can be accomplished by placing video monitors in public spaces both on board vessels and in boarding terminals. Choose public spaces such as lobbies and waiting areas that will attract passenger attention and provide optimum viewing opportunity. Display the safety video program at least once immediately before, and once immediately after a new set of passengers have boarded the vessel.

Safety Card

Each passenger should be given an illustrated card or folder explaining the emergency and safety-related procedures aboard the vessel. Distribute the safety card before or immediately after a passenger boards the vessel. Design the card or folder using diagrams and pictures to the greatest extent possible. The safety card or folder should be a stand alone document and not contain advertisements, discount coupons, shopping information, etc. Categorize information in the card by degrees of severity so as not to trivialize the seriousness of some of the more important survival information. Separate action items from informational items. Write the safety cards in the active voice.

Posted Notices

Safety information can also be provided by posting safety notices or instructions. These instructions should be similar to the safety card or folder described earlier. Post these notices at locations throughout the vessel and in boarding terminals in spaces where they are most likely to be seen by passengers. Bring the posted notices to the attention of the passengers by making a safety announcement. Make the announcement after boarding all the passengers, and either prior to or immediately upon the vessel's departure from the berth.

4.5 Safety Announcements

Safety announcements made over the vessel's public address (PA) system should begin with a special signal followed by a request for everyone's attention. Present the broadcast in a casual, conversational manner. Messages may be pre-recorded to ensure clarity of enunciation. Do not broadcast any other announcement or music while the safety briefing is being made. Complete the announcement before beginning any entertainment. The shop and services staff should reduce their activities to a minimum during the announcement.

4.6 Information to Passengers During an Emergency

Passengers should be given factual information on the nature of the emergency, the steps being taken to deal with the emergency, and updates on the state of emergency as frequently as possible. Well informed persons are able to take appropriate actions. A person specifically dedicated to communications should make the announcements on the PA during an emergency. Provide two-way communications between the bridge and assembly stations.

5.0 EMERGENCY ACTION OR CONTINGENCY PLANS

5.1 Objective

The emergency action or contingency plans should provide the actions to take in responding to specific emergencies. In responding to a casualty, the master's priority should be to ensure the safety of personnel and the vessel, and to take action to prevent escalation of the incident. Develop a contingency action plan for each emergency that might be encountered. The steps followed for every emergency could be very similar.

5.2 Geographical Area of Operation

The geographic area in which the vessel operates will greatly influence the contents of the plan. Take into account the local conditions such as distance from shore, depth of water, temperature, water current, visibility, vessel traffic, and local search and rescue resources. Also take into account the vessel's own lifesaving and firefighting equipment. A plan that relies on the response of external resources must include the organizations controlling those resources in the development of the plan. In addition, such organizations need to have their own version of the plan, describing their response responsibilities and procedures.

5.3 Evacuation Procedures

Regardless of the type of contingency that a vessel may face, the primary objective in each case is to prevent any loss of life. Evacuation procedures in the plan should include the following stages of passenger egress:

Stage 1 Egress

Prepare procedures for getting passengers from vessel spaces to a qualified refuge area or assembly station. Post signs and directions where they are most likely to be seen by passengers, announce safety instructions to passengers over the PA system, and instruct the crew to direct passengers. Insofar as possible, directional signs should consist of readily understandable symbols and diagrams such as those described in "International Maritime Organization Resolution A.760", with a minimum of wording.

Stage 2 Egress

Prepare procedures for getting passengers from the safe refuge area to an embarkation area. Accomplish this by using the crew to direct passengers to the embarkation area. In exceptional circumstances, it may be possible to demonstrate that it will not be necessary to evacuate the vessel under any credible fire or accident scenario. In such cases, stage 2 egress procedures are not necessary.

Stage 3 Egress

Prepare procedures for evacuating passengers from the embarkation area to points of safety. Address all possible emergency scenarios. The procedures will vary depending on the type of emergency, the number and type of lifesaving appliances on board, and the shore side rescue assets and resources available at short notice. Main vertical zone fire boundaries are tested for a 1-hour fire endurance. Therefore, stage 3 egress should normally be able to be completed within 1 hour from the time a fire emergency is declared and stage 1 begins. However, the specific construction of a vessel or its damage stability characteristics may dictate a greater or lesser available evacuation time. In general, evacuation from a vessel to a point of safety can be categorized under the following four scenarios:

- Passengers will be evacuated from the vessel to shore through slides, chutes, gangways, or embarkation and accommodation ladders.
- The vessel is pierside and passengers will be evacuated from the vessel to pierside using the same means as were used to come aboard the vessel.
- Passengers will be evacuated from the vessel to adjacent vessels.
- Passengers will be evacuated from the vessel to survival craft.

5.4 Considerations in Developing Evacuation Procedures

Consider the factors discussed below when developing evacuation procedures.

Passenger Diversity

Passengers may be--

- Elderly and frail;
- Physically handicapped;
- Inebriated; or

- Separated from the group or family they came with, especially separated from small children.

Passenger Accountability

It is important to keep a count of all passengers that are on board the vessel at any given time and to develop a procedure for accounting for passengers during an emergency. If vessel operations do not permit an accurate count of passengers, an estimate of the number of passengers on board should be made.

Lifesaving Appliances

Take into account the lifesaving appliances that are available and their stowed location on board while preparing evacuation procedures:

- Lifejackets must be available for every person on board the vessel, and must be stowed in public areas or assembly stations, so that passengers can go directly to the assembly stations without having to detour to collect their lifejackets. Stow lifejackets so that distribution and donning does not impede or slow traffic through the passageways.

- At least one motor rescue boat should be available to retrieve persons from the water or to marshall survival craft. The rescue boat would normally be launched and standing by prior to commencing an evacuation of passengers into the survival craft.

- Other lifesaving appliances such as liferafts, chutes, slides, telescopic metallic ladders, or gangways should be available, as appropriate, based on the different risk scenarios developed for the vessel.

5.5 Assessment of Emergencies

The first step in the process is to assess the extent of the emergency such as the nature of the damage, failure, or breakdown of the vessel machinery or equipment. Provide strict guidelines as to when and how to report the situation. Give the master guidance to evaluate a situation and assess the risk to passengers given the geographical area of the vessel's operation. It is impracticable to lay down precise definitions for all situations, but in general, the master should immediately inform the Coast Guard and other port and shore authorities in cases of collision, grounding, fire, explosion, structural failure, flooding, failure or breakdown of machinery or equipment such as steering gear, main propulsion, electrical generating system, and essential shipboard navigational aids.

5.6 Procedures to Mobilize Emergency Response Teams

Compile a list of specific, sequential or concurrent actions that must be taken to counteract each emergency and prevent or minimize any damages. Identify who on board is responsible for each action to avoid confusion during the emergency. The actions listed below are only a

guide and could be started concurrently. The actions are not all inclusive nor do they restrict the master's discretion. Expect to accomplish most of the action items in the list within the first 10 minutes of an incident.

Loss of Steering or Vessel Not Under Control

- Inform the master.
- Inform the engine room.
- Engage local steering from the steering flat.
- Post lookouts and establish lines of communications between the steering room and the bridge.
- Provide status to other vessels in the area and maintain contact through VHF channels.
- Deploy the anchor if appropriate.
- Make an announcement over the PA system providing a status report to passengers.
- Assemble passengers at the assembly station and take a count of the passengers.
- Inform vessel owners, agents, and other involved parties.
- Contact shore resources, if appropriate, such as river police, towboat or barge companies.
- Have a tugboat push the vessel back to dock and evacuate passengers.

Collision and Grounding

- Inform the Master.
- Inform the engine room.
- Close all watertight doors.
- Make an announcement over the PA system providing a status report to passengers.
- Assemble passengers at the assembly station, provide first aid if required, and take a count of the passengers.
- Locate and assess the damage.
- Isolate damaged area if possible.
- Provide status report to other vessels in the area and maintain contact through VHF channels.
- Inform vessel owners, agents, and other involved parties.

- Contact shore resources, if appropriate, such as river police and towboat or barge companies.
- Take tank soundings to determine any hull breach/oil spill.
- In case of oil spill or discharge, take actions as described under "Oil spill".
- In case of fire, take actions as described under "Fire and explosion".
- If the decision is made to abandon ship, take actions described under "Abandon vessel".

Fire and Explosion

- Inform the master.
- Inform the engine room and start the fire pumps
- Locate the seat of the fire.
- Sound the general alarm.
- Announce over the PA system the nature of the emergency.
- Assemble firefighting parties.
- Isolate fire by emergency shut down of blowers, vents, fire screen doors, skylights, etc.
- Evacuate passengers to an area of safe refuge (stage 1 egress).
- Take a count of passengers and check for missing or injured people.
- Proceed to extinguish the fire.
- Announce over the VHF radio the vessel's status and establish communications with vessels in the area, and seek help if required.
- Assess the damage to the vessel.
- Inform vessel owners and agents.
- Inform the Coast Guard.
- Inform port and other local authorities such as the fire department and hospitals.
- Make the decision to stay or abandon ship.
- If the decision is made to abandon ship, take actions described under "Abandon vessel".

Oil Spill

- Identify and secure the source of the spill.

- If fueling or transferring oil, stop immediately.
- Remove or disable potential ignition sources.
- Inform the master.
- Contain the spill using onboard equipment.
- Keep passengers away from the affected area.
- Inform the Coast Guard and other local authorities.
- Continue clean up operations.

Bomb Threat

- Inform the master.
- Inform the Coast Guard, port authorities, local police and fire departments, area hospitals, and appropriate Federal agencies.
- If at a terminal, disembark passengers immediately.
- If underway, muster the vessel's department heads and conduct a search of each department.
- Sequester passengers in a previously searched area.
- Take a count of passengers and check for missing or injured people.
- Announce over the PA system the nature of the emergency.
- Search passenger cabins.
- In consultation with local authorities, make the decision to abandon ship or proceed to the nearest port.
- Upon arrival at port, disembark the passengers immediately.
- See Security Plan as required by 33 CFR parts 120 and 128. See Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 3-96 for additional guidance.

Flooding

- Inform the master/engine room.
- Sound the general alarm.
- Assemble the damage control parties.
- Close the watertight doors.

- Close the firescreen doors.
- Locate the extent of the damage.
- Start the bilge and other available pumping systems.
- Isolate the damaged area, control the flooding, and reduce the free surface.
- Send a distress message over the VHF radio.
- Assemble passengers in the assembly station.
- Announce over PA system and prepare to abandon ship if necessary.

Abandon Ship

- A vessel that is tied pierside and that has easy access to shore should be evacuated as quickly as possible.
- The decision to abandon an underway vessel must only be made when all other options have been exhausted.
- Once the decision to abandon ship is made, inform all crew members of the decision and instruct them to go to their stations.
- Inform vessel owners, agents, and other involved parties.
- Contact shore resources, if appropriate, such as river police and towboat or barge companies.
- Initiate and maintain contact with other vessels in the area through VHF channels.
- Announce over the PA system the nature of the emergency and the intended action.
- Take a count of the passengers that have been assembled at the assembly or muster station.
- Inform master of missing or unaccounted passengers.
- Give instructions to passengers on the next course of action such as donning a lifejacket, using a chute or slide, or entering a liferaft, as appropriate.
- Maintain contact with other vessel and shore resources to plan and execute the most effective way to evacuate passengers. Such action could be intentional grounding of the vessel, running it into shore, or maneuvering vessel alongside a barge or other rescue platform.
- Direct passengers to points of safety (stage 2 and stage 3 egress).

Man Overboard

- Upon sighting a person overboard, throw a ring lifebuoy with lifeline into the water.
- Inform the master.
- Stop the engines.
- Launch the rescue boat.
- Recover the person.
- Follow the procedures under "Medical emergency" as appropriate.

Emergency on Another Vessel

- Maintain contact with the disabled vessel through the VHF radio.
- Inform the master.
- Provide assistance as required.
- Contact shore resources, if appropriate, such as river police and towboat or barge companies.
- Maintain contact with other vessels in the area through VHF channels.

Medical Emergency

- Render first aid/CPR.
- Inform the master.
- If required, seek medical-evacuation help over the VHF radio.
- Inform the local ambulance service.
- Inform vessel owners, agents, and other involved parties.
- Secure the injured person on the stretcher.

5.7 Exercising Contingency Plans

As contingency plans are developed they must be exercised and refined. Any organization that has developed a contingency plan is actually a part of several different response community levels starting with itself at the core.

Level 1 Exercises

At this level, focus on developing and practicing the vessel's initial response capability such as alerting key personnel, starting emergency systems, securing non-essential machinery, starting evacuation procedures, controlling and directing passengers, and deploying on site personal protective and lifesaving equipment. Hold such exercises at least once a month.

Level 2 Exercises

This is where the concept of a response community exercise becomes operative. At this level, exercise with some or all of the external organizations listed in the plan. Focus on management exercises involving the organization's response management team members. Table top exercises are appropriate Although several organizations participate, the plan holder must design, control, exercise, and evaluate the plan. These exercises are more elaborate and require more planning. Hold these exercises at least once a year.

Level 3 Exercises

These represent a more advanced type of response community exercise. At this level, several contingency plan holders come together as equals to cooperatively plan and execute a marine incident response exercise. The objectives of this exercise are determined and agreed to collectively by the group instead of a single sponsoring organization.

6.0 LIST OF CONTACTS AND REPORTING PROCEDURE

6.1 Contact List

Provide details of all parties that are to be advised in an emergency. Provide this information in the form of a contact list. Keep this information current at all times. When compiling such lists, remember that during a serious incident, vessel's personnel will be fully engaged in saving lives and taking steps to control and minimize the effects of the casualty. Do not hinder personnel by imposing onerous communications requirements.

6.2 Responsible Person

Clearly specify the person or persons responsible for informing personnel listed on the contact list. Coordinate the vessel's plan and the company's shoreside plan to ensure that all parties are advised and to avoid duplication of effort.

6.3 Reporting Procedure

Provide clear guidance to crew on the preferred means of communication (radio, telephone, fax, etc.) with the parties listed on the contact list. If the vessel visits many different ports on a regular basis, compile a contact list for each regularly visited port and their preferred

means of communication. If the vessel visits a port for the first time or on an infrequent basis, provide guidance to the master to obtain details concerning local reporting procedures upon arriving in port.

7.0 ANNEXES

Other shipboard plans or safety related information should be provided in the plan if they include relevant information to assist in an emergency. To keep the plan uncluttered and easily usable, it may be appropriate to provide other plans or information in an annex as a separate document which should be updated regularly. Examples of shipboard plans or safety related information that could be included as an annex to the plan include, but are not limited to, the following:

7.1 Muster List or Station Bill

Prepare using procedures under "Crew duties and responsibilities".

7.2 Fire Control Plan

Provide a general arrangement of the vessel, showing clearly the following for each deck:

- The control stations.
- The sections enclosed by "A" class and "B" class divisions.
- The particulars of the fire detection, fire alarm, sprinkler installation, and fire extinguishing appliances.
- The means of access to different compartments.
- The ventilating system particulars such as fan control positions, position of dampers, and identification numbers of ventilating fans serving each section.

7.3 Damage Control Plans

Provide a general arrangement plan showing the following for each deck:

- The boundaries of all watertight compartments.
- The watertight doors and the means of closure.
- The location of remote and local controls that operate the watertight door.
- The arrangement of correction of any list due to flooding.