The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), supported by the National Maritime Information Centre (NMIC), is monitoring vessels that have visited ports in Countries where the Ebola virus (Viral Haemorrhagic Fever) is present and where their subsequent voyage plans indicate they intend to transit through UK waters or stop at UK ports. Every such Vessel of Interest (Vol) will also be contacted by the Coastguard, as it enters UK AIS coverage, to determine the vessel’s health status.

If a Vol seeks Radio Medical Advice (RMA) through the Coastguard, or requires a Search & Rescue (SAR) response, or a medical evacuation, HM Coastguard will notify SAR units before a response can be undertaken so that they can prepare for and manage the situation more cautiously if required.

Where notified by the vessel, or a SAR resource, or where a RMA Doctor suspects the symptoms may be of Viral Haemorrhagic Fever, the vessel will be asked to divert to the nearest suitable port where the casualty can be taken off the ship by land based medical services in a controlled manner. The relevant Ambulance Service (and public health agencies) will be informed of the situation by the Coastguard. The Coastguard will work with the land emergency services and port authority to ensure that the patient is landed in a measured way. Additional liaison with all other relevant Category 1 / 2 Responders will be agreed between HM Coastguard and the Ambulance Service.

The MCA is working closely with DFT, PHE, MoD, UK SAR Helicopter services and Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) to monitor and manage this situation in support of wider UK activity.

It has been agreed that lists of Vol will be provided from the NMIC to the Pilotage and Ports communities via the following contacts:

UK Harbour Masters Association
All UK VTS authorities
British Ports Association
UK Marine Pilots Association
Deep Sea pilots
Trinity House

The information contained in the VOI lists should only be used and shared with individuals who have a genuine operational port or pilotage interest. Any request received for this information should be directed to the MCA contacts below.

Where a UK port or pilot service is to board or handle a Vol, they are to contact MRCC Solent (Solent Coastguard) when the vessel is within 4 hours of a port/pilot station to check if the VOI has been subject of a SAR or medical advice or medical evacuation event. If a VOI has, the port or pilot service can, depending on the circumstances, take appropriate advice and guidance.

MRCC Solent can be contacted on 02392 552100
Any further Questions about this information can be directed to:
MCA Head of Resilience, Iain Campbell – 07715 377873 or
HM Coastguard HQ Operations, Roly McKie – 02380 329332