# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ANTARCTICA TOUR OPERATORS

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A member organization founded in 1991 to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic

# Search and Rescue Workshop Co-Sponsored by MRCC Chile and IAATO **Results in Improved Emergency Planning and Communications**

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

May 16, 2013...The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) and the Chilean Marine Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) today provided details on a joint Search and Rescue Workshop conducted last month in Punta Arenas, Chile.

The full-day SAR seminar and interactive workshop was held April 25 in conjunction with the IAATO 24th Annual Meeting, which attracted more than 125 participants from 20 different countries to the three day gathering, April 22-24. The 75 workshop attendees included passenger ship captains, government rescue officials from Chile, Argentina and the United States, tour operators, logistics managers, expedition leaders, IAATO staff and others.

Morning presentations were made by Admiral Ivan Valenzuela of the Chilean Navy; Michelle Rogan-Finnemore of the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP); David Rootes, Environmental Manager of Adventure Network International-Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions; and Dr Kim Crosbie, Executive Director (elect) with IAATO. The proceedings were chaired by David Edwards from the Office of Search and Rescue, US Coast Guard.

Valuable information on rescue procedures, communications and technical systems, and the importance of training and drills while operating in Antarctica was exchanged. Following lunch, the attendees switched gears, with the opportunity for participants to act as incident commander during a replay of a response exercise conducted during the recent Antarctic season in partnership Holland America Line's 1,500-passenger *Veendam*.

Dr. Kim Crosbie, Executive Director (Elect) for IAATO, noted, "Good communication is the key to any successful search and rescue operation in Antarctica. It is also very effective in contingency planning among the many parties that collaborate and work together to mount a rescue effort. This workshop was an excellent example of that."

Admiral Valenzuela provided details on the joint PANC Agreement, whereby Chile and Argentina share maritime rescue patrol duties in the Antarctic Peninsula region during the austral summer season. "For the Chilean Navy and particularly for the Chilean MRCC, this

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workshop was a great opportunity to share experiences with the major Antarctic tour operators, and to outline the procedures which leads to a maritime SAR operation.

"There is no doubt that mutual cooperation between vessel operators and MRCCs having SAR responsibility in the Antarctic is a key issue for the success and safety of tourism activities. In the end, the safety of life at sea and the protection of the Antarctic marine environment are the major goals for all of us. Anything that contributes to these objectives will always have our support." Admiral Valenzuela thanked IAATO for organizing the workshop, and for the opportunity for MRCC Chile to be a part of being part of such a worthwhile event in Punta Arenas.

During the multi-media presentation on the *Veendam's* simulate response exercise, held in early February of this year off the Antarctic Peninsula, attendees used their expertise in making critical decisions at various intervals of the staged drill, then compared notes with actual decisions made during the exercise.

"Holland America was the first large cruise ship operator to enter the Antarctic market more than a dozen years ago, and we apprecited the opportunity to participate and learn from this exercise," said Mike Inman, Vice President of Safety and Environmental Management Systems for the company.

The workshop focused on a broad range of issues pertaining to search and rescue in the Antarctic Treaty area and was intended to anticipate similar discussions planned for the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM XXXVI) scheduled later this month in Brussels, Belgium. Chile and IAATO will provide a joint information paper on the results of the workshop at the ATCM meeting. Following the Brussels meeting, the paper can be downloaded from IAATO's website.

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# **ABOUT IAATO**

IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO currently has 116 members. IAATO members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. Numerous guidelines have been adopted over the last 22 years that have proven to be successful in avoiding such impacts. These include but are not limited to: site specific guidelines, site selection criteria, passenger-to-staff ratios, limiting the number of passengers ashore, boot-washing guidelines and the prevention of the transmission of alien organisms, wilderness etiquette, garbage policy, ship scheduling and vessel communication procedures, emergency medical evacuation procedures, emergency contingency plans, reporting procedures, marine wildlife watching guidelines, station visitation policies and more.