



Jersey Coastguard and St Helier Vessel Traffic Service

ANNUAL REPORT
2024

Who we are and what we do

The Maritime Operations Centre (MOC) serves as home to Jersey Coastguard, a recognised Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), and the St Helier Vessel Traffic Service (VTS). It plays a crucial role in enabling port operations for the lifeline port of St Helier, operating 24/7, 365 days a year. Jersey Coastguard and VTS are integral to the safety and efficiency of maritime activities, with a dedicated team comprising 10 watch officers, five duty officers, and the Chief Coastguard/Harbour Master.

Jersey Coastguard plays a vital role in ensuring the safety, security, and well-being of those who navigate the waters surrounding the island of Jersey, operating with a commitment to professionalism, efficiency, and dedication.

Comprising highly trained professionals, Jersey Coastguard undertakes a range of crucial responsibilities to safeguard mariners, residents, and visitors alike. Some key aspects of their role include:

- Search and Rescue (SAR): Jersey Coastguard coordinates search and rescue operations in response to distress calls or emergencies within Jersey's 660nm² territorial waters. This involves deploying assets to locate and assist vessels or individuals in need of assistance.
- Communications and coordination: Jersey Coastguard serves as a central communication hub for maritime emergencies, liaising with various agencies, vessels, and authorities to coordinate responses effectively.
- Maritime safety: We work closely with the Maritime Standards Department, ensuring that all maritime operations adhere to the highest safety and regulatory standards. This collaboration includes monitoring vessel traffic, interrogating commercial vessels, and issuing safety advice to mariners to prevent accidents and ensure safe navigation.
- Public awareness and education: We engage with the public to raise awareness about sea safety, offering educational programs, and promoting responsible maritime practices.

2024 in summary



Jersey Coastguard responded to **210** incidents, dealing with distress and 999 calls, coordinating and tasking search and rescue partners, including lifeboats, fixed wing aircraft, other emergency services such as States of Jersey Fire and Rescue Service, States of Jersey Police and Jersey Ambulance, as well as asking ships in the vicinity to assist.



St Helier Vessel Traffic Service monitored **4,507** commercial vessels in and out of St Helier Harbour, comparable to pre-pandemic levels.

4,000

We delivered the Sea Safety campaign to more than **4,000** school children and hosted a successful stall over the three-day Barclays Jersey Boat Show.



As part of our public engagement activities, we held an **Open Day** on Sunday 20 October, welcoming visitors into Maritime Operations Centre.

Search and Rescue (SAR)

We provide 24-hour emergency response search and rescue coordination for our territorial waters. During the year, Jersey Coastguard responded to 210 incidents, dealing with distress and emergency 999 calls. The number of incidents during 2024 was five more than 2023.

Vessel equipment failure remained the main cause of SAR incidents, with Jersey Coastguard coordinating available assets to assist, which accounted for a fifth (total 43 - 20.5%) of all reported incidents, down from just under 23% in 2023.

The second highest incident type was action with good intentions (AGI) or incidents where someone appears to be in difficulty. This is a report made to Jersey Coastguard with a concern for safety, that is resolved without utilisation of assets or where the concern was unfounded after further initial investigation.

The third highest type of recorded incident was that of a concern for welfare of person(s), at 9% of total incidents, a decrease compared to 2023 of 4%.

Trends

Jersey Coastguard Officers complete a SAR report after every incident. Since 2018, we've used digital dashboards to display these statistics. This allows us to respond immediately to emerging trends, eg types of incidents, time of day, locations, or hot spots. We use this information to promote targeted and relevant safety messaging on social media, increase the number of patrols and monitor specific areas with CCTV, for example Elizabeth Castle causeway which is a common location for people being cut off by tides.

Most commonly recorded incidents, 2024 vs 2023

- equipment failure (43 vs 47)
- action with good intentions or person appears in difficulties (29 vs 20)
- concern for welfare (19 vs 27)
- cut off by incoming tides (18 vs 13)

Air Rescue Drone Team – first active year

The Air Rescue Drone Team became a declared SAR asset at the end of January. Following a joint review of procedures, processors and external certifications, the team became available for tasking 24/7. The voluntary team is made up predominantly of ex-emergency services staff giving them a strong foundation for working alongside Coastguard, SAR partners and other emergency services.

The team carry several drones suited for a variety of scenarios, and weather conditions. Drones can be fitted with a variety of equipment depending on the search requirements, including:

- Thermal night vision cameras
- Powerful search lights
- Speaker and audio capabilities
- Tethered power, enabling unlimited flight time.

The use of drones offers the Coastguard an efficient and reliable way to search difficult coastal regions quickly and safely, including cliffs that can be hard to access, and low tide areas which can change rapidly.

In 2024, the team were tasked to 23 emergency call outs. There were eight additional requests relating to public safety, which included checking the integrity of hangar roofs at the airport following Storm Ciarán, before Jersey Airport could be re-opened. Throughout the year, the team also worked with other SAR partners on joint SAR exercises.



Communications and coordination

Jersey Coastguard serves as a central communication hub for maritime emergencies, liaising with various agencies, vessels, and authorities to coordinate responses effectively.

As a small island, we are fortunate to have access to an extensive network of search and rescue resources from neighbouring territories, which complement our own locally stationed assets. Jersey's participation in the Anglo-French Accidents Technical Group (AFATG), collaboration in MANCHEPLAN (the Anglo-French Joint Maritime Contingency Plan for the English Channel), and membership in the UK Search and Rescue (SAR) Committee are crucial. These longstanding initiatives are regarded as exemplary models of international cooperation.

Membership in these groups has allowed us to cultivate strong partnerships with search and rescue teams in Guernsey, France, Ireland and across the UK. Through regular bi-annual meetings, we exchange insights, enhancing our respective SAR response protocols and staying informed about the latest SAR technology. In times of need, we can also request assistance from these allied entities, as demonstrated on occasion in 2024 when we required additional air and sea assets, such as lifeboats, fixed-wing and rotary aircraft, and offshore support vessels.

This collaboration is reciprocal, with Coastguard agencies in Guernsey and France reaching out to us for assistance due to our 24/7 availability, unlike many

French waterborne assets that are constrained by tides along the Normandy coast. These relationships ensure that we possess formidable, combined search and rescue capabilities, ready to respond to emergencies at sea or along our coastlines whenever distress calls are received.

A multi-agency search and rescue incident

At 2am at the start of October, Cross Jobourg reported to Jersey Coastguard a visiting sailing vessel that had suffered electrical failure with one person aboard. She was somewhere around the Minquiers reef, her position was unknown.

Jersey Coastguard and CROSS Jobourg worked together to coordinate the Search and Rescue operation involving French Helicopter assets, the Channel Island Air Search (CIAS) aircraft, local fishing vessels and the RNLI St Helier all weather lifeboat.

After an extensive six-hour search during darkness, the casualty vessel was located 10 miles off Jersey's south-west coast by CIAS with assistance provided by the RNLI back to St Helier. The sailor onboard was cold and tired but otherwise well and continued on his southbound sail after a couple of days rest at St Helier Marina.

Search and Rescue - working with the community

While declared Search and Rescue organisations and assets play a crucial role, our most valuable resource is the public, who act as our eyes and ears around the islands shores and on the water. In 2024, just over half of all incidents were reported by members of the public.

When Jersey Coastguard receives a call for assistance at sea, we issue a general call on the VHF radio, asking if any nearby vessels can provide aid, depending on the severity of the situation.

In 2024, mariners again responded to calls for assistance. Instances where the public were instrumental include aiding vessels experiencing equipment failure, assisting individuals stranded by rising tides, helping boats that are taking on water, and rescuing people who have fallen overboard.

Search and rescue exercises

To ensure that our Watch Officers and Search and Rescue partners are prepared for various scenarios, they undertake a range of exercises during the year, involving multiple agencies.

- On 16 May, the UK led a comprehensive Coastguard tabletop exercise. Coordinated by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), this exercise involved Jersey, Guernsey, and Jobourg Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCC) to plan the search for an overdue vessel transiting from the UK to St Malo.
- On 1 June, the annual Jersey/Jobourg MRCC exercise took place, featuring participation from RNLI (St Helier and St Catherine's), Jersey Lifeboat Association, French Société Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer (SNSM) stations, and the French Naval Helicopter. This exercise alternates annually between Jobourg and Jersey. The 2024 scenario involved a vessel sinking on the Jobourg/Jersey territorial waters boundary, with a search for people in the water with a life raft. The exercise concluded with a visit to Jersey by SNSM and Jobourg MRCC crews.
- A further 16 joint services exercises were conducted with SAR partners, including communication exercises and search area tasking.
- Jersey Coastguard Watch Officers participated in onboard exercises with the JLA and RNLI to familiarise themselves with the operational capabilities of the vessels.
- Watch Officers and Acting Harbour Masters recorded a total of 57 individual ad hoc exercises to maintain competency levels in search planning (THEMIS SAR), call collection, and Coastguard operations.

St Helier Vessel Traffic Service

A standard Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) performs the following functions:

- Provides timely and relevant information regarding factors that could impact ship navigation and aids onboard decision-making.
- Monitors and regulates ship traffic to ensure the safety and efficiency of maritime movements.
- Responds promptly to emerging unsafe situations.

Vessels are required to report to St Helier VTS if they are over 25 meters in length or engaged in towing activities. These reporting vessels must maintain vigilance on the assigned VTS port working frequency, which is VHF Channel 14, and actively engage with the services provided by the St Helier VTS. They are obligated to report upon entering or leaving the VTS area and at designated Reporting Points (RPs).

St Helier VTS monitored 4,507 reporting commercial vessel movements within the port of St Helier and VTS area, and organised 304 acts of pilotage, a decrease of 160 acts compared to 2023. A marine pilot is a qualified local advisor to the shipmaster, who provides navigational assistance onboard the visiting vessel.

Traffic Reports

We encourage individuals embarking on sea journeys to file a Traffic Report, regardless of the type of craft they're using. This ensures that we have a record of who is at sea, the number of people on board, their intended destination, and their expected arrival time. Such information can prove invaluable in situations where mariners encounter difficulties at sea or when family members express concerns for overdue vessels.

In total, 12,811 Traffic Reports were submitted, reflecting a decrease in reports from pleasure vessel users compared to 2023, but where commercial TR's and TRACE reports remained at similar levels.

Trace app has continued to gain popularity as the preferred method for logging Traffic Reports, with 7,560 journeys recorded solely through the app. In 2024, we have expanded the application with a dedicated rowing club vessel section and look to continue to accommodate sea swimmers, and other water users, enabling them to document their activities effectively.

You can find out more about the Trace app on our website:
www.ports.je/jerseycoastguard/trace/

Commercial vessel interrogations

As part of our coastal state responsibilities, Jersey Coastguard regularly communicates with commercial vessels over 300 gross tonnes as they traverse our territorial waters. This practice enhances our situational awareness regarding the nature and frequency of commercial activities within our maritime jurisdiction.

Typically, we inquire about a vessel's recent and upcoming ports of call, the number of individuals on board, the type and quantity of cargo and fuel onboard (including lubrication oil and gas oil), and whether the vessel has any operational issues. This proactive approach allows us to respond more efficiently and effectively in the event of any difficulties and to allocate resources accordingly.

In 2024, we conducted inquiries with 316 commercial vessels passing through Jersey's territorial waters, marking a decrease of 56 transits from 2023, a similar number to 2022.



Public awareness and education

We have launched safety campaigns, ramped up social media activity, featured in the media and worked with partner organisations to deliver important safety messages to the public.

Social media

Our social media profile has continued to grow over the past year with audiences climbing to more than:

- 12,000 on Facebook
- 1,225 on Instagram.

Our engaging social media campaign garnered significant attention, with an average post engagement rate of 6.5% on Facebook and 4.7% on Instagram. Our Facebook page reached over 1 million users, resulting in almost 1 million post impressions.

Our social media channels serve as one of our primary and most impactful communication tools, enabling us to share crucial sea safety messages, deliver announcements, and share updates with our audience. In addition to allowing us to relay information to the public, page followers also facilitate valuable interaction and feedback. This is particularly evident in situations where items like vessels, life jackets, or kayaks are found adrift, necessitating assistance in identifying their owners and ensuring their safety. In such instances, we can rely on our followers to help spread the message and offer assistance.

Facebook: @JsyCoastguard

Instagram: @jerseycoastguard

Marketing campaign

Throughout 2024, we continued the marketing campaign to highlight sea safety messages across Jersey Coastguard's social media platforms.

Drawing insights from trends observed in the previous year, we crafted a variety of posts and videos covering topics such as being cut off by tides, understanding rip currents, emphasising the importance of life jackets, and promoting our Coastguard Safety Identification Scheme (C-SIS).

School sea safety messages

In 2024, our Officers worked with Love Theatre to deliver a new play as an interactive way to share important sea safety messages to almost 4,000 primary school children at more than 70% of primary schools.

Barclays Jersey Boat Show

The three-day Barclays Jersey Boat Show is an important opportunity for our Officers to engage with the public and deliver sea safety messages. In 2024, we spoke to hundreds of people who visited our fun, interactive stand.





Our People

In 2024, the team's learning and development activity included:

- In June, the Quality Assurance Officer attended South Shields Marine school for two weeks to qualify as C0103-2 VTS Supervisor. The course was a mixture of classroom, off site team building, and simulator training, culminating in a simulator assessment, written assessment, submission of written assignment and portfolio.
- A new Acting Harbour Master passed their Search Mission Coordinator training with MCA.
- In November, two Watch Officers qualified as C0103-1 VTS Operators, following completion of distance learning nautical knowledge, and online practical simulator training. The assessment was provided by AFS consultants.



- In November, all the VTS Officers completed and passed an annual VTS assessment, which included a practical online simulator and a written exam, provided by AFS consultant. The required pass mark was 70%, and our Officers passed with a minimum pass mark of 82%.
- A total of 347 hours of CPD was recorded by Watch officers, including visits to SAR partners, attending non-operational courses, bridge visits, attending seminars and workshops.

We use the results of our annual People Survey to monitor our performance and to inform action where this is needed. We are committed to supporting our staff and ensuring that their wellbeing is looked after, offering counselling after search and rescue incidents.

