

**JOINT PRESS STATEMENT –
KYODO SENPAKU KAISHA, LIMITED / THE INSTITUTE OF CETACEAN RESEARCH**

5 JANUARY 2009

SAILOR OVERBOARD ACCIDENT

A crew member aboard one of the Japanese whale research vessels in the Southern Ocean was reported missing at approximately 0330hrs Japan time, Monday 5 January.

The 30-year-old oiler, Mr Hajime Shirasaki, worked in the engine room of the Kyoshin Maru No.2, a dedicated sighting vessel engaged in the Japanese whale research program in the Antarctic (JARPA II).

The President of Kyodo Senpaku Kaisha, Mr Kazuo Yamamura, said an on-board search of the vessel was undertaken as soon as the crew member was reported missing. At the same time, judging the possibility of an overboard accident, a search of the near sea area was also conducted.

Mr Yamamura said that, in addition, the other research vessels began moving to the area to join in the search for the missing man.

The incident was immediately reported to the Japanese Coastguard, which informed the New Zealand authority, Maritime New Zealand, responsible for search and rescue under the SAR Convention. (International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR), April 27, 1979)

The Kyoshin Maru No. 2 conducts the non-lethal aspects of the Japanese whale research program and is dedicated to sighting surveys to determine whale abundance, as well as carrying out oceanographic surveys and echo-sound research.

The Director-General of the Institute of Cetacean Research, Mr Minoru Morimoto, said this was a particularly distressing time for the crew on board the Kyoshin Maru No.2, as well as all Japanese crew and scientists in the Antarctic.