

GMDSS TASK FORCE INFORMATION BULLETIN

PRUDENT MARINERS UTILIZE MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION (MSI) BROADCASTS

Marine Safety Broadcasts and the GMDSS.

Reception of MSI by ships subject to the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) is mandatory and is strongly advised for all other vessels. Governments make warnings available and broadcast them at no expense to mariners.

For information on National Weather Service marine forecast and warning products, services and dissemination methods and on U. S. Coast Guard dissemination methods visit <https://weather.gov/marine>. You can find the information by mousing over tabs such as Marine Text Forecasts, Dissemination and Radiofax Charts.

NOAA Coastal Weather Broadcasts on VHF Radio.

This is not a GMDSS required service but is provided by the National Weather Service (NWS) and the U. S. Coast Guard in the U.S. for all mariners but especially for recreational vessels that have few radio regulatory requirements.

The broadcasts are continuous and dedicated to various sections of the coast. They can be received on regular marine VHF radios and special hand held receivers sold for that purpose. NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) broadcasts marine weather information along the coast out to about 60 nm from shore. The frequencies of each station range from 162.400 MHz to 162.550 MHz. Broadcasts on marine radios or NWR are usually provided in an automated voice in English.

NAVTEX Coastal MSI Broadcasts.

NAVTEX is the official GMDSS MSI short range broadcast service with a range of about 250-500 miles. The Coast Guard maintains the system in the U.S. and broadcasts weather forecasts and warnings from the NWS along with other marine warnings on Aids to Navigation, overdue vessels etc.

Reception is by a special receiver that prints warnings or holds them for viewing and contains a processor that skips over warnings already received. Broadcasts from different stations along the coast are time shared on the frequency 518 kHz but emergency alerts are broadcast on receipt. Broadcasts are by text in the English language.

National broadcasts in a local language can be made on 490 kHz worldwide and 4209.5 kHz may be used in tropical regions when MF Navtex is impacted by interference. Most NAVTEX receivers now have all three frequencies available.

High Seas MSI Broadcasts.

The high seas are divided into twenty one NAVAREAS and METAREAS for purposes of directing Navigational Warnings and Meteorological Forecasts and Warnings to appropriate ocean areas. Search and Rescue information is also provided either to the NAVAREA or METAREA as a whole or to special geographical areas as needed. Five new Nav and Met areas were added in the Arctic in 2010 in recognition of increasing Arctic commerce.

These MSI broadcasts are by satellite using either the Inmarsat system's SafetyNET service or (effective in 2020) the Iridium system's SafetyCast service. Both satellite systems broadcast the same MSI warnings that can be received on an Inmarsat-C Ship Earth Station (SES) or on an Iridium SES certified for GMDSS. Broadcasts are by text in the English language.

Additionally for the United States, the Coast Guard makes Marine Weather broadcasts on VHF and HF. These services are via RadioFax, Radio Telex (SITOR or NBDP) and Voice (VHF).

The GMDSS Task Force.

This Information Bulletin was adopted on 14 October 1997 and most recently updated on 14 May 2020 by the GMDSS Task Force, a Coast Guard sponsored group established to coordinate problems, recommend their resolution, and disseminate GMDSS information.