

NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of August 5, 2008 Meeting

The Summary Record. This summary record is provided for information and will be posted on the Task Force portion of the Coast Guard web site at www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/ (click GMDSS, then GMDSS Task Force). The summary record is also distributed to all Task Force members to serve as a Newsletter summarizing GMDSS developments and other issues in marine telecommunications.

The GMDSS Task Force met at the Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services (RTCM) headquarters in Arlington Va. The documents listed below were distributed and are available on request:

CFIVSAC Recommendations on Task Force F/V Safety Draft Comment
Updated Status Report on ad hoc group on Annual GMDSS Inspections
FCC Notice Seeking Comment on Waiver for Personal Radar Transponder
Coast Guard Notice Terminating HF Radiotelex, at Camspac & Kodiak
Task Force Letter to National Safe Boating Council
BOAT US Press Release on 50,000th MMSI Registration
Gilbert Paper on GMDSS Functional Requirements and Modernization
IMO Circulars on LRIT Implementation

1. **Summary Record of May 8 2008 Meeting:** The Summary Record of the 8 May, 2008 meeting which had been distributed earlier, was noted. There was a minor correction to the paragraph on LRIT which has been included in the version posted on the website.

2. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

a. Status of MF-DSC Coastal Network Upgrade to DSC for Sea Area A2.

Captain Drew Rambo was introduced to the Task Force as the new Chief of Coast Guard Communications relieving Captain Len Ritter. Dave Fowler gave an update to his study on upgrading the MF-DSC coastal network. A contract to model predicted coverage from the CAMs and COMMSTAs is currently out for bid. The decision options include repairing existing Sector sites; upgrading hardware at existing Sector sites (and adding some additional Sector sites); or guarding all six International Telephony Distress Frequencies and MF/HF DSC frequencies from the CAMS and COMMSTAs rather than only 2182 kHz telephony and 2187.5 kHz MF DSC from most Sector sites.

b. Status Report on Rescue 21 VHF-DSC for Sea Area A1. CDR Al Arsenault of the Rescue 21 Program, provided a comprehensive update briefing noting that they continue to get very good search and rescue results from the Sectors which have been activated. This includes receipt of low powered handhelds from 20 miles offshore. 406 MHz direction finding capability is still being planned from coastal towers where expected coverage ranges from 17 to 22 miles offshore. Ranges of 100 miles or better are

being realized from aircraft equipped for 406MHz direction finding. A question was raised as to whether the Coast Guard would declare Sea Area A1 operational as major sections of the coastline are completed? Since work is progressing simultaneously on the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific coasts, a more likely scenario is declaration of Sea Area A1 for the Conus which could be made by the end of 2010 without waiting for total system completion in Alaska and the inland waters in about 2017.

c. Automatic Identification System (AIS). No formal briefing on AIS progress was available but members reported on several aspects of AIS as follows:

1.) The Task Force expressed frustration and impatience with the continued delay in certification of the AIS Class B by the FCC. It was considered that since numerous letters and emails to the Commissioners from members and from the Task Force had received no response, it was time to request the Coast Guard to intervene with the FCC citing the benefits of broader fitting of AIS by voluntary vessels with respect to safety of navigation and support of the Coast Guard's Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) program. The Director drafted such a letter to the Commandant of the Coast Guard and coordinated with interested members. The edited letter was sent on 15 August 2008 and is now posted on our website. During approval of the letter to the Coast Guard, there were several suggestions that we also write the FCC Commissioners. This was done and a similar letter dated 22 August was sent to the Chairman and the other Commissioners. The FCC letter is also posted on the website.

2.) A recreational AIS user cruising in Vinyard Sound and Buzzards Bay expressed surprise that the high speed ferries operating in that area were not AIS equipped which would seem to be a priority given the frequent low visibility in that area.

3.) Russ Levin reported on some tests of AIS enhanced EPIRBs conducted in the UK which yielded detection ranges of 4.3 miles from an antenna height of ½ meter and 9.7 miles from an antenna height of 1 meter.

4.) The Task Force has asked to review a joint response from the Coast Guard and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to Congress explaining the potentially overlapping requirements for AIS and VMS. This has not yet been made available to the Task Force.

d. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT). Commander Kevin Keast and his staff provided an update on LRIT implementation plans including the Coast Guard's development of the interim International Data Exchange (IDE). Highlights are as follows:

1.) Ships are required to be equipped for LRIT participation by 31 December 2008 or by the date of their next required annual Radio Survey. Two recent MSC Circulars on LRIT implementation were distributed at the meeting.

2.) Administrations desiring to take data from the system must construct their own

National Data Center, join a regional Data Center or request support from another Data Center. Some countries have asked to use the U.S. Data Center and the European Data Center is expected to support about 30 countries.

3.) Work is well along on the IDE being constructed at Martinsburg WV and there is no estimate of how long the Coast Guard's offer to operate it will be accepted. So far, there is no funding available to the International Mobile Satellite Organization (IMSO), the designated LRIT Manager, which would enable them to take over operation of the IDE.

4.) There is as yet no clear indication as to how many countries plan to request ship movement data from the IDE but it is expected that RCCs will request data on vessels near the scene of a search and rescue incident since there will be no charge for that data.

(5.) There are a number of unresolved issues such as a disaster recovery site for the IDE.

3. The FCC Reports: Ghassan Khalek reported for the FCC, the following are highlights of his report:

a. Status of Class B AIS Devices. The Task Force was once again extremely disappointed to find that FCC approval of the Class B devices has still not been granted. Note the action outlined in paragraph 2, d, (1) above to request Coast Guard intervention.

b. Public Notice DA 08-1578 on Waiver for Personal Radar Transponders. The FCC indicated that most responses were favorable. Since there was a very short time allowed for response to this Notice, neither the RTCM nor the Task Force responded. Since the RTCM has a special Committee studying emergency beacons of all types, it would have been appropriate to refer the notice to that committee for response.

c. FCC Response to Task Force Petition and Recommendations on MMSI Policy. The substance of the Task Force Petition of 21 May 2007 was put out for public comment for which the closing date was shortly following our October meeting. 591 Comments were received, all supporting the Task Force position. The FCC has not yet announced their decision on the Task Force petition but it is believed that they are attempting to implement the recommendations, some of which require changes to the Universal Licensing System (ULS). We hope to have more progress by the October 2008 meeting.

d. Further Part 80 Rule Making. There were no further developments on outstanding items expected to be addressed in Part 80. This will include extensive rule changes suggested by Owen and Kurt Anderson to resolve inconsistencies.

4. The RTCM Report: RTCM President Bob Markle reported on several issues as follows:

a. Activity of RTCM SC 101/110 on Incorporating GPS in VHF Handhelds.

The handheld envisioned by the Special Committee has been recommended to the ITU as a new category, tentatively identified as Class H. At the same time the IMO has gone on record in a recommendation to ITU that Class D radios should be simplified. The Special Committee has asked the Task Force whether the new handheld standard should be envisioned as a replacement for the lifeboat VHF portable radios and the Task Force agreed that it should.

b. Activity of RTCM SC-121 on Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). This committee is reviewing expanded use of the AIS record messaging system for possible applications such as broadcasting of weather and other security and environmental information. A Working Group of the Special Committee is concentrating on expanded use of AIS in Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) areas and will conduct trials in the Tampa Bay area.

c. Activity of RTCM SC-127 on eLoran. E Loran is an enhanced Loran relying on precise timing and no longer needing to operate in 'chains'. It is being strongly advocated in Europe and has recently been designated as the U.S. system to provide back up for GPS. The Committee has decided that two new standards are needed, one to define the eLoran signal in space and another to set a standard for an eLoran receiver. The Chairman of SC 127, Captain Ben Peterson, briefed the Task Force on their current efforts including definition of the Loran data channel.

d. Other RTCM Announcements of Interest. The 2009 RTCM Assembly including a Task Force meeting will be at the Tradewinds Hotel in St. Pete Beach, Florida May 3-9, 2009.

5. GMDSS Modernization Initiative. Admiral Ed Gilbert reported as follows:

a. New Paper on Functional Requirements and Modernization. Admiral Gilbert briefed the group on a number of possible new developments in ownership of satellite systems. He also noted that some of the new generations of satellites would include terrestrial components operating on the same frequencies. New L band systems could provide cellular like service at comparable pricing He also introduced a new edition of his paper outlining the GMDSS Functional Requirements and efforts to date on modernization of the System.

1). Functional Requirements. Two basic issues which need to be clarified at IMO include a concept of operations for LRIT as a security system with search and rescue applications, and the fact that LRIT, SSAS, and AIS are not GMDSS systems but are related to GMDSS. The group did not see any likelihood of eliminating any of the GMDSS functional requirements but agreed that consideration should be given to adding a new one calling for interoperability between SOLAS vessels and non-SOLAS vessels. This has been provided primarily through retention of the channel 16 VHF watch on SOLAS vessels for interoperability with non-SOLAS vessels. Another candidate

function would recognize the need to communicate between vessels and aircraft which typically perform the search for vessels in distress. In this regard it is noted that cruise ships are now required to carry VHF-AM to communicate with aircraft on 121.5 MHz.

2). GMDSS Modernization. Dan Lemon reported on Cospas-Sarsat plans to upgrade the system with faster positioning, better accuracy, and new satellite constellations carrying their transponders. All of the navigation satellites including GPS, GLONASS, and GALILEO have announced intention to carry the Cospas-Sarsat transponders and GALILEO is hoping to make theirs a two way system which can acknowledge receipt of an alert to the sender. The successful changes already approved by IMO included Paperless Navtex receivers and the AIS SART alternative. Recent proposals in the IMO Comsar Subcommittee to phase out Narrow Band Direct Printing (NBDP) using HF Email as the alternative were not accepted. Possible new initiatives which might be proposed include the following:

- 1.) An AIS enhanced EPIRB
- 2.) Upgrading lifeboat VHF portables with VHF-DSC/GPS handhelds
- 3.) A VHF-AM radio for communication with search aircraft
- 4.) Recognition of the MSV push to talk system used on 1000 Alaskan F/V
- 5.) There are several satellite systems which could provide valuable safety services but GMDSS certification by IMO seems unlikely since any new provider would be required to make very large payments to IMSO to fund the latter's supervisory role

b. Developments in E Navigation. This is a new initiative which the Task Force is following. "E Navigation" encompasses a variety of integrated digital applications including electronic chart displays and an enhanced Loran service termed eLoran. The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) is developing a 'vision' for E Navigation and two IMO Subcommittees (Radionavigation and Communications, Search & Rescue) have established work programs including a Correspondence Group to work between sessions.

6. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group: Ralph Sponar and Rich Beattie moderated the discussion on the new ad hoc group established to review policy and procedures related to the annual GMDSS inspection. An updated report was provided to the Task Force and the ad hoc group met that afternoon to carry the work forward. Rich Beattie has done an excellent job of compiling an electronic version of the FCC inspection checklist augmented with material from the ABS forms. The next step is to work in navigation items requiring inspection which are in the Coast Guard's purview. In a related matter, Russ Levin and Bob Markle are updating the Coast Guard's Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) number 3-99 summarizing GMDSS requirements. The ad hoc group will meet again at RTCM on the morning of 23 September.

7. **Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group:** The draft comment to the Coast Guard recommending updating of small fishing vessel radio safety standards which was approved at the May meeting has not yet been filed since the Coast Guard has extended the reply date from 29 July to 15 December 2008. The final comment will be edited to reflect the positions of the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Advisory Committee (CFIVSAC) and will be presented to the Task Force at its 3 October meeting for final approval.
8. **Reports and Issues: The Recreational Vessel Group Report.** Chuck Husick reported that BOAT US had recently passed the 50,000 mark in issuing MMSIs to boats. He also suggested that the Coast Guard issue more reports of successful saves using Rescue 21 to assist the Task Force campaign to get all users of VHF-DSC radios to register for an MMSI number and connect a GPS receiver.
9. **Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Training Group:** Both the FCC and the Coast Guard's National Maritime Center have the latest version of the GMDSS Question Pools posted on their websites and there are currently no training issues outstanding.
10. **The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force:** The Task Force agreed to meet next on Friday morning 3 October 2008 during the annual meeting of the National Marine Electronics Association (NMEA) in San Diego. The follow-on meeting of the Task Force will be in early January 2009 at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

5 August 2008

1. Monitor FCC continuing action to update GMDSS Rules (TF)
2. Recommend actions to reduce false alerts in GMDSS systems (TF)
3. Monitor Coast Guard Port State GMDSS inspection program (TF)
4. Monitor MSI broadcasting programs for compliance with GMDSS Standards (TF)
5. Review GMDSS Internet Web Sites and update Task Force portion of USCG site (TF)
6. Support SOLAS Working Group planning for IMO COMSAR meetings (TF)
7. Advocate Canadian coordination to extend GMDSS services to the Great Lakes (TF)
8. Review GMDSS concepts and make modernization recommendations (TF)
9. Advocate regulatory action to require VHF or EPIRBs for all vessels offshore (TF)
10. Advocate overhaul of FCC policy and practice on MMSI assignments (TF)
11. Monitor non-GMDSS systems: AIS, LRIT, SSAS, VDR, VMS, & E-Navigation (TF)
12. Recommend updates for Coast Guard NVIC on GMDSS Requirements (TF)
13. Advocate intership calling on HF GMDSS channels (CV)
14. Review Safety Radio and VMS Requirements for Small Fishing Vessels (CV)
15. Recommend training programs for non-mandatory users of GMDSS systems (RV)
16. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
17. Encourage voluntary users of VHF-DSC Register for MMSI and connect GPS (RV)
18. Advocate FCC enable R/Vs keep existing MMSI when applying for Station Lic. (RV)
19. Encourage Mfgs. to upgrade GMDSS explanations in equipment manuals (SA)

20. Monitor guidelines for GMDSS equipment maintenance & maintainer standards (SA)
21. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)
22. Advocate better FCC & USCG management of annual GMDSS inspections (SA)
23. Maintain GMDSS Question Pools for FCC and Coast Guard Examinations (TR)

Key to cognizant groups: (TF) Task Force
 (CV) Commercial Vessel Task Group
 (RV) Recreational Vessel Task Group
 (SA) Service Agents and Manufacturers Task Group
 (TR) Training Task Group

Attachment: Draft Agenda for Task Force Meeting 3 October 2008 with NMEA in San Diego, California.

Please refer questions and proposals to Captain Jack Fuechsel at 703-527-0484 or gmdss@comcast.net If you have an Internet server with spam filters, please authorize receipt of messages from gmdss@comcast.net

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