

## NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

### Newsletter and Summary Record of 22 October 2004 Meeting

1. 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/](http://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.

The GMDSS Task Force met in Naples, Florida on 22 October 2004 during the annual meeting of the National Marine Electronics Association (NMEA). The documents listed below were distributed and copies are available on request. Some are also posted on websites:

Summary record of Task Force meeting of 19 August 2004  
Gilbert Paper proposing candidate issues for GMDSS Modernization  
Inmarsat Notice on intent to phase-out L-Band EPIRB support  
Reference listing of AIS General Information, Guidelines & Standards  
Briefing notes on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers radio operations  
Information paper on the Worldwide Navigational Warning System

2. The Summary Record of the 19 August Task Force meeting was approved.

3. **The FCC Reports:** As part of the scheduled FCC and Coast Guard Regulatory Panel, FCC representatives made introductory statements and responded to questions as follows:

**a. FCC's Enforcement Bureau.** George Dillon outlined the scope of his office's responsibilities which include operating a direction finding net to identify interfering signals and out of band operations. The network also supports rescue operations and law enforcement activities generally. The FCC can assess penalties up to \$11,000 for Hoax distress calls.

**b. Compliance Check Lists available.** Subsequent to the meeting, George Dillon completed work updating several check lists which can be used to assess compliance with rules for radio equipment needed to comply with safety regulations. In response to a question as to whether Automatic Identification Systems (AIS), Ship Security Alerting Systems (SSAS), and Voyage Data Recorders (VDR) should be added to the check lists, George replied that they are not technically GMDSS systems but that those items could be added in an Annex. It was noted that some Classification Societies have begun to add those items to their annual inspections. The checklists can be found at the web sites shown:

GMDSS requirements generally: [www.fcc.gov/ShipInsp/gmdss.html](http://www.fcc.gov/ShipInsp/gmdss.html)

Fishing Vessels over 300 tons: [www.fcc.gov/eb/ShipInsp/fishing.html](http://www.fcc.gov/eb/ShipInsp/fishing.html)

Small Passenger Vessels: [www.fcc.gov/eb/ShipInsp/small.html](http://www.fcc.gov/eb/ShipInsp/small.html)

**c. Retention of MMSI Numbers by Recreational Vessels Dropping FCC Station Licenses.** Ghassan Khalek repeated the FCC's earlier determination that many recreational vessels no longer need individual radio station licenses since they are now 'licensed by rule'. The Commission has decided to let such vessels retain their present MMSI number used for identification in the VHF-DSC and AIS systems. This will avoid the need to apply for a new MMSI number via BOATUS or Sea Tow and have the new number embedded in the radio. Instead, they will be permitted to continue to use the same number provided they re-register with BOATUS or Sea Tow. This is a necessary step to insure that the vessel identity is available to the Coast Guard in emergency and is also highly desirable since the earlier vessel identity collected by the FCC did not collect all of the information currently being provided for owner contact etc. The Commission plans to notify holders of expiring licenses of the procedure to be followed should they not plan to renew the license. In response to a question, Ghassan confirmed that MMSI numbers would be issued for VHF portables with DSC capability.

**d. New MMSI Numbers for Vessels Using 'Fleet' MMSI Numbers.** Ghassan Khalek repeated the FCC's earlier determination that to comply with AIS regulations, each vessel must have an individual MMSI number and cannot continue to use the 'fleet' number previously provided to a group of vessels owned by the same licensee.

**e. Status of Part 80 Rule Making proceedings.** Ghassan Khalek provided a summary of recently completed and still pending regulatory proceedings. Some of the highlights included the following:

- VHF channels 75 and 76 have been designated for Port Operations
- Small passenger vessels will need DSC one year after USCG declares A1 & A2
- New Rules were adopted to govern Automatic Identification Systems (AIS)
- International VHF channels 87B and 88B also designated for AIS in U.S.

**4. The Coast Guard Reports:** As part of the FCC/Coast Guard Regulatory Panel, Coast Guard representatives made introductory statements and responded to questions as follows:

**a. Upgrade of the VHF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A1.** Ed Brady noted that operational testing was now underway at Groups Atlantic City and Eastern Shore. No further information was available concerning the overall schedule but it now appears very doubtful that VHF-DSC will be available in the St. Petersburg, Florida during the Task Force's May meeting there. One factor complicating deployment is the recognized need to provide for interoperability with other law enforcement agencies, both federal and local.

**b. Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2.** Ed Brady indicated that there have been no new developments in the project to complete an upgrade to MF-DSC. No projected completion date is available but it is understood that where equipment has been installed, a pre-operational watch is being maintained on both 2182 and 2187.5 kHz. It is

cautioned however that coverage is uncertain where needed antenna upgrades have not been completed.

**c. Prospective changes mandated by the Marine Transportation Security Act.**

Ed Brady noted that the vessel tracking requirements of the Act were quite broad and that further extensions could be expected to include all navigable water and outfitting of many smaller vessels.

**d. Coast Guard to commence guard of GMDSS voice frequencies.** Ed Brady noted that effective 1 January 2005; the Coast Guard's High Frequency Communications Stations would commence guarding the voice channels designated for GMDSS. This will be in addition to the HF-DSC Distress and Safety alerting channels presently guarded. If it is necessary to work non-distress voice traffic, they will be shifted to the old full duplex channels. The Coast Guard GMDSS website has been updated to reflect the changes. The new simplex voice frequencies which will be used for distress alerting and initial contact are:

4125 kHz

6215 kHz

8291 kHz

12290 kHz

**e. Future developments in AIS and Long Range Tracking (LRIT).** Ed Brady also noted some of the additional developments under consideration to extend the tracking of vessels under the broad concepts of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). For high seas tracking, an IMO initiative is being developed to potentially require tracking capability on all SOLAS vessels. Various systems are under review, primarily satellite based. Extension of AIS coverage is also being studied and includes placement of AIS receivers on buoys, offshore platforms, aircraft, and even satellite systems. Coast Guard AIS expert, Jorge Arroyo, had provided a reference document entitled "**AIS General Information Guidelines and Standards**" which was passed out at the meeting and can be provided on request.

**f. Ship Security Alerting Systems (SSAS).** In response to a question, Ed Brady confirmed that the destination for alerts from U.S. flag ships was the Alameda, California MRCC.

**5. The Army Corps of Engineers Report:** Greg Formosa, Spectrum Manager for the Corps provided a very informative presentation on the status of GMDSS elements on Corps vessels and shore facilities. The Corps has eight Divisions which are responsible for navigation, flood control, environmental protection, disaster response, and military construction. Their radio operations include land mobile, vessels, locks and dams, hydrologic operations and differential GPS services. Their vessel VHF operations will be shifting to DSC and shore facilities which communicate with other vessels will also be acquiring DSC capability. AIS is not currently programmed but vessels will likely be equipped and some shore facilities may become AIS equipped to monitor vessel traffic.

6. **The GMDSS Modernization Initiative.** RADM Ed Gilbert provided a status report on the Task Force's new initiative concerning GMDSS modernization. The latest version of a paper identifying possible issues was distributed for information and discussion. The list includes both modernization issues and domestic implementation issues. An ad hoc group is working by email to prioritize the list and develop tentative Task Force recommendations on selected items. Some of the major issues raised include the following:

- a. Should VHF channel 16 watch be phased out or retained indefinitely?
- b. Should Sea Area A1 be declared on a regional or national basis?
- c. Should a 'sunset' date be recommended for non-DSC HF operations?
- d. Should the International Class D VHF standard replace SC-101?
- e. Should new Mobile Satellite systems be accepted for GMDSS?
- f. Should any new systems accepted be required to broadcast MSI?
- g. Are four levels of GMDSS priority really needed?
- h. Should NBDP and Telex be replaced with other record systems?
- i. What modernization features should be recommended for MF/HF systems?
- j. Can internet services be recognized for some GMDSS services?
- k. Should the Hawaiian radio requirements be extended to other coastal states?
- l. Do regulations for domestic fishing vessels below 300 tons need updating?
- m. Can Navtex throughput be increased to accommodate broadcast volume?
- n. Should AIS, SSAS, & LRIT be declared GMDSS systems for better control?
- o. Should AIS vessels also be required to have a VHF radio capability?

7. **The RTCM Report:**

a. **RTCM Website.** RTCM President Bob Markle noted that their website program that enables ship operators to enter vessel parameters and read out all SOLAS Chapter IV requirements for GMDSS had been extended to include equipment requirements related to the vessels choice of maintenance options. Users are invited to offer suggestions for further improvement of the site.

b. **SC-101 Standard.** Bob responded to a question about the status of the SC-101 VHF-DSC standards by reporting that the RTCM had advised the FCC that the international Class D specification appeared suitable for non-SOLAS vessels and that the FCC had been invited to incorporate that standard in their regulations in lieu of the SC-101 standard.

c. **RTCM Assembly.** Bob also announced that the 2005 RTCM Annual Assembly would be held in St Pete Beach, Florida at the Trade Winds hotel 15-20 May. The GMDSS Task Force will likely be invited to meet on Thursday 19 May 2005.

8. **The Recreational Vessel Group Report:** Typical issues affecting recreational vessels were discussed during the regulatory panel. The Task Force continues to review the Hawaiian Law requiring all vessels operating more than a mile offshore to have either a VHF radio or an EPIRB. The National Boating Safety Advisory Council adopted Resolution 2004-74-05 on 12

October 2004 calling for the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) to “create a Model Act regarding the presence of VHF radios and/or EPIRBs on boats operating more than one mile offshore in coastal and Great Lakes areas.”

9. **The Report of the GMDSS Training Group:** Captain Joe Ahlstrom’s earlier proposal to modify GMDSS training standards for cadets at the Maritime Academy remains under review by an ad hoc committee of Task Force training experts. A recommendation is expected to be ready for Task Force review at the next meeting.
10. **The Report of the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group:** A presentation on Ship Security Alert Systems (SSAS) was presented by Jeff Douglas of Absolute Software. He outlined policies adopted by other administrations and implementation problems encountered.
11. **The Report of the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group:** Most of the issues of this group were discussed during the Regulatory Panel. An Inmarsat Notice was distributed indicating that L Band EPIRB support would be discontinued at the end of 2006 in view of the small number that had been deployed. Inmarsat plans to offer replacement 406 MHz EPIRBs but Germany has announced as effort to block Inmarsat’s proposed termination in IMO.
12. **The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force:** The Task Force agreed to meet next in Washington DC on 6 January 2004.

#### **GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST**

22 October 2004

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. Disseminate GMDSS Information Bulletins and IMO GMDSS Documents (TF)
8. Advocate Canadian coordination to extend GMDSS services to the Great Lakes (TF)
9. Review GMDSS concepts and make modernization recommendations (TF)
10. Recommend Coastal states require VHF or EPIRBs for all vessels offshore (TF)
11. Review GMDSS publications and recommend updates to keep the data current (TR)
12. Encourage AMVER & VOS participation to supplement GMDSS (CV)
13. Publicize availability of NAVTEX receivers without printers for all vessels (CV)
14. Advocate intership calling on HF GMDSS channels (CV)
15. Encourage Mfgs. to upgrade GMDSS explanations in equipment manuals (SA)
16. Recommend to FCC clarifications to their List of Approved GMDSS Equipment (SA)
17. Monitor guidelines for GMDSS equipment maint. and maintainer standards (SA)
18. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)

19. Recommend training programs for non-mandatory users of GMDSS systems (RV)
20. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
21. Recommend Class 'D' VHF-DSC as superior to RTCM SC-101 format (RV)

Key to cognizant groups:

- (TF) Task Force
- (TR) Training Task Group
- (CV) Commercial Vessel Task Group
- (SA) Service Agents and Manufacturers Task Group
- (RV) Recreational Vessel Task Group

Please refer questions and proposals to Captain Jack Fuechsel at 703-941-1935 or [gmdsstf@cox.net](mailto:gmdsstf@cox.net)

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