

NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of 6 January 2005 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/ (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 Washington, DC on Thursday 6 January 2005. 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 22 October 2004
Gilbert Paper proposing candidate issues for GMDSS Modernization
Task Force Comment to FCC on AIS Spectrum
New GMDSS Information Bulletin on Tonnage Interpretations
NBSAC Resolution for Model Act re EPIRBs and VHF offshore

2. The Summary Record of the 22 October Task Force meeting was approved.

3. **The Coast Guard Reports:** 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. LCDR Dave Savatgy noted that system integration testing is now complete at Groups Atlantic City and Eastern Shore and that operational testing would commence in February. He acknowledged that the overall schedule has slipped, and it now appears that completion of the CONUS VHF-DSC network will not occur until 2007. The St Petersburg, Florida area and the Pacific Northwest are next in the schedule and could be in operational testing by about November. Other stations on the Gulf coast are next in line and could be in an operational testing mode by the end of 2005. While the need to stretch out the schedule is regrettable, at least the stations will remain on the air in a pre-operational status following operational testing.

b. Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2. Russ Levin 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 two to three years may be required putting this program roughly on the same time line as the VHF upgrade. Since equipment has already been installed at most stations, a pre-operational watch is being maintained on both 2182 and 2187.5 kHz. It is cautioned however that coverage is uncertain since needed antenna upgrades have not been completed.

c. Current status of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). Jorge Arroyo

reported that as of mid December the Coast Guard estimated compliance at 65-95% not including tugs. Enforcement guidance has been issued to field commands encouraging warnings and allowing 30 days to achieve compliance. Installation guidance is still being developed and will include recommendations on issues such as antenna separation on smaller vessels. New AIS carriage rules are expected for domestic vessels and will likely be issued along with new rules requiring electronic chart display equipment for certain vessel categories (note that vessels do not derive the enhanced safety benefit of AIS unless connected to a display system). In response to questions, Jorge advised that:

- 1). Common errors include improper MMSI, position, and vessel details
- 2). Fleet Licenses for Tug fleets must be changed to individual licenses to obtain an MMSI
- 3). USCG will launch a major acquisition in the fall of 2005 to extend AIS shore coverage beyond VTS areas to include all navigable water
- 4). Small Passenger Vessels of less than 150 Tons on international voyages are not required to have AIS and should have an endorsement to this effect placed on their Certificate of Inspection (COI)

d. Future developments in Long Range Identification & Tracking (LRIT). Bill Cairns noted that LRIT will be a major topic at the upcoming IMO COMSAR Conference in February. The United States has submitted a paper to the conference suggesting functional requirements of a LRIT system and offering a system based on AMVER as an interim solution. The summary record of the October meeting noted some of the additional developments under consideration to extend the tracking of vessels under the broad concepts of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). It should be noted that the United States along with many other nations already tracks large numbers of fishing vessels as a fisheries enforcement tool.

e. IMO/COMSAR 9 Meeting in London 7-11 February 2005. Russ Levin outlined the principal agenda items for the upcoming conference and invited interested parties to participate in the preparatory work for the Conference through membership in the SOLAS Working Group for COMSAR. Those wishing to be on the list and review documents for the meeting should send an email to Russ at rlevin@comdt.uscg.mil . The next Task Force meeting will review the decisions of the COMSAR 9 Conference.

f. Proceedings of the Merchant Marine Safety and Security Council – The Coast Guard Journal of Safety at Sea: Capt Steve Sawyer, Chief of Search and Rescue reported that the current issue of the Proceedings was devoted entirely to Search and Rescue and extended an invitation to interested parties to be added to the complimentary distribution list. Those interested should send an email to Dan Lemon at dlemon@comdt.uscg.mil .

4. The FCC Reports: FCC representatives made introductory statements and responded to questions as follows:

a. Status of Part 80 Rule Making proceedings. Ghassan Khalek provided a summary of recently completed and still pending regulatory proceedings. An email had been received from Owen Anderson noting many discrepancies and inconsistencies in Part 80 and offering to lead an ad hoc group effort to recommend changes. Ghassan welcomed this development and indicated that the FCC would follow up on changes recommended. Owen Anderson welcomes the assistance of others in addition to a few that he has already signed up. Members desiring to participate should send an email to Owen at anderow@att.net .

b. Compliance Check Lists available. It was reported in the last summary record that compliance check lists had been developed to assess compliance with rules for radio equipment needed to comply with safety regulations. The checklists can be found at the web sites shown:

GMDSS requirements generally: www.fcc.gov/ShipInsp/gmdss.html

Fishing Vessels over 300 tons: www.fcc.gov/eb/ShipInsp/fishing.html

Small Passenger Vessels: www.fcc.gov/eb/ShipInsp/small.html

c. Clarification of GMDSS Requirements for Fishing Vessels: Following a GMDSS presentation at Fish Expo by George Dillon of the FCC and Ed Brady of the Coast Guard, there were questions raised to the Task Force that seemed to indicate some misunderstanding on the part of those in attendance or those who had received third hand information. With this in mind we had planned to clarify those issues at the 6 January meeting but neither George nor Ed were able to attend. Instead, we have collected several of the questions and issues with the intent of providing clarification from George and Ed:

1). Are fishing vessels over 300 tons required to fit for GMDSS? Yes, the FCC treats fishing vessels as cargo vessels and has not exempted them from GMDSS requirements including equipment appropriate for their area of operations and having at least two crewmen licensed as GMDSS operators.

2). Are these 300 ton fishing vessels required to comply with STCW? No, U.S. fishing vessels are not required by the Coast Guard to comply with the IMO Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchstanding (STCW). This means that they are NOT required to send all deck officers to resident GMDSS training courses and receive a Coast Guard certification of GMDSS compliance. As an exception to this policy, the Coast Guard has determined that Fish Processing vessels (but not fish-tenders) are required to be STCW compliant.

3). Must 300 ton fishing vessels fit a GMDSS equipment Console? No, there is no requirement that required GMDSS equipment be centralized in a console. Most large fishing vessels already carry most of the required GMDSS equipments and should be able to fully comply with the addition of only one or two pieces of GMDSS equipment.

4). Does the FCC A1/A2 Waiver apply to fishing vessels? Yes, but only to those fishing vessels which operate exclusively in prospective Sea Area A1 (within 20 miles of land); or in prospective Sea Area A2 (within 100 miles of land). These waivers permit vessels which are required to outfit with VHF or MF radio to delay upgrading to DSC until 1 year after the Coast Guard declares Sea Area A1 and/or A2 operational. Vessels which also operate in Sea Area A3 (the high seas beyond A1 and A2) must comply with GMDSS carriage requirements for Sea Area A3 which include both VHF-DSC and MF-DSC capability.

5). Are fishing vessels required to carry AIS equipment? No, fishing vessels are generally exempt from the requirement to carry AIS equipment. This means that even fishing vessels over 65 feet in length which transit Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) areas are not required be fitted with AIS.

d. New Issue: Can Recreational Vessels keep existing no-fee MMSI when applying for a Station License? This issue has been raised by vessels having a BOATUS issued MMSI but desiring to get an FCC Station License in compliance with the Rule that requires the Station License for international voyages. Ghassan Khalek acknowledged that the Universal Licensing System (ULS) would not accept an existing MMSI not issued by the FCC and insisted on assigning a new MMSI. He explained that the ULS was a very complicated system and that it would be very expensive to reprogram the system. The proponents of the change pointed out that the current system was wasteful of MMSI numbers and caused additional expense to the boat owner to have the MMSI number changed in the equipment. In the spirit of the FCC mandated “transportable numbers for cell phones policy” they asked the FCC to consider modifying the ULS to accept the existing MMSI numbers. Ghassan indicated that he would look into the matter further.

5. Reports from other Government Agency Fleet Operators: Other government agencies were invited to update the Task Force with respect to management of their fleets. We heard from the Corps of Engineers at the last meeting and the following reports were provided at the January meeting:

a. Report from National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) Fleet Operations. Paul Parsons provided the NOAA report, which indicated that all NOAA vessels were GMDSS equipped and that they intended to also equip with AIS even though it is not technically required of public vessels. NOAA has done extensive training of GMDSS operators including 148 students since 1995. In some cases, the training team comes to the ship, which has the advantage of training students on their own ship’s equipment.

b. Report from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS): Jon Pinkerton reported for the NMFS with operates a few fisheries research vessels but his report dealt primarily with their tracking of U.S. fishing vessels by satellite systems for enforcement purposes. There are 2592 U.S. fishing vessels enrolled in the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) of which 2152 are currently active. They expect to add another 3000 vessels in each of the next

2 years as well as some state and federally operated vessels bringing the total close to 10,000 vessels. There are 6 approved satellite systems used in the tracking including 2 non-GMDSS systems. The service providers have enhanced the offerings to include email service, which is popular with the fishing vessels and has resulted in a number becoming voluntarily equipped. NMFS hopes to integrate VMS and AIS and plans to collect additional data in the future such as ocean salinity and management data such as catch by species. If NMFS buys the equipment in the future they plan to limit purchases to GMDSS qualified systems.

c. Report from the Military Sealift Command (MSC): Tim Langdon reported for the MSC, which is the civilian component of the U.S. Navy. MSC currently operates 90 government owned and 40 chartered vessels. These vessels operate in 3 modes; government owned and government operated (GOGO), contractor owned and contractor operated (COCO), and GOCO. MSC is also working with the U.S. Navy to jointly operate command ships and tenders. These vessels will remain U.S. Navy vessels with MSC providing the engineering and support staffing. MSC and the American Bureau of Ships (ABS) have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which addresses MSC's unique operating profile while also recognizing the need to comply with classification society rules. New vessels built since 1980 are built to ABS rules. MSC operated ships are GMDSS compliant and they will be adding AIS and SSAS. MSC plans for all vessels to fully participate in AIS and SSAS carriage without compromising security. The U.S. Navy has published AIS guidance and Navy ships will "participate in AIS subject to the decision of the Captain".

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. Members desiring to be added to the ad hoc group should send an email to Admiral Gilbert at gilbinc@aol.com.

7. The RTCM Report: RTCM President, Bob Markle, made the following announcements:

a. 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.

b. GMDSS Status and Modernization. For planning purposes, the 2005 Assembly is expected to include a double session on GMDSS Status and Modernization.

8. The Recreational Vessel Group Report:

a. DSC Tutorial: The Task Force has been following the development of a DSC tutorial by the BOAT U.S. Foundation under a Coast Guard grant. The program is being developed by Chuck Husick and is expected to be available for Beta testing by members within a few months.

b. Brochure on Recreational Boating Communications: Sea Tow and the Coast Guard have collaborated on a new trifold brochure entitled **Recreational Boating Communications**, which Sea Tow plans to hand out at Boat Shows etc. It covers Distress procedures, DSC, Testing, MSI Broadcasts, and EPIRBs. For copies of the brochure contact Sea Tow at 1-800-4SEATOW , Ext 125. It may be posted on the Sea Tow website at a later date.

9. The Report of the GMDSS Training Group:

a. Request by SUNY Maritime to modify GMDSS Training: Captain Joe Ahlstrom's earlier proposal to modify GMDSS training standards for cadets at the Maritime Academy was reviewed by an ad hoc committee of Task Force training experts. The recommendation is, it is all right to conduct GMDSS training on smaller vessels and on short deployments as long as the training is supervised by a certified GMDSS Instructor. A formal response to this effect will be sent to Captain Ahlstrom with a copy to the Coast Guard's National Maritime Center (NMC).

b. Training Criteria for Certification as GMDSS Maintainer: The Coast Guard Regional Examination Centers will not certify an FCC Licensed GMDSS Maintainer for shipboard duty solely on the basis of the FCC License. Instead, USCG MOC Policy Letter 06-03 requires further evidence of qualification, which would normally be completion of a course which covers all elements of the STCW Model Course. Such a course is not being offered in the U.S., which makes qualification very difficult. There is very limited demand for shipboard maintainers in the U.S. but several members have expressed an interest in working with an ad hoc group to recommend more realistic criteria to the Coast Guard. Any members desiring to participate in the Maintainer Criteria ad hoc group should send an email to Jack Fuechsel at gmdsstf@cox.net .

10. The Report of the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group:

a. NOAA Establishes Website for Environmental Data: The NOAA National Ocean Survey (NOS) has redesigned the NowCOAST Portal, a web mapping portal providing nationwide spatially-referenced links to thousands of realtime coastal observations and metrological, oceanographic, and hydrological observations from a variety of internet sites within and outside NOAA along with forecasts from the National Weather Service (NWS) and NOS. The site is designed as a planning aid for recreational and commercial mariners, coastal managers, HAZMAT responders, marine educators, and researchers. The portal may be accessed at <http://nowcoast.noaa.gov> .

b. Revised GMDSS Information Bulletin on Tonnage Interpretations: The Task Force approved a slightly updated version of the GMDSS Information Bulletin on Tonnage Interpretation for GMDSS. The new version will be placed on the Task Force website.

c. Coast Guard NVIC 12-04, Maritime Security Compliance and Enforcement in Canadian Boundary and Coastal areas: This new Navigation and Vessels Inspection Circular (NVIC) can be accessed on the Coast Guard website at www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/nvic/ , follow instructions to open 12-04.

11. The Report of the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group:

a. Dual Antenna Ports on some MF/HF Radios: It has been noted that some models of MF/HF Radios have dual antenna ports. This is usually the case when a guard receiver is incorporated. In order to maintain watch on the guard receiver, it must have an antenna connected to the guard receiver port as well as the antenna connected to the transmitter port.

b. New IMO COMSAR Circular 32 on Harmonization of Radio Installations: The IMO has published a new COMSAR Circular, which gives detailed advice on the Harmonization of Radio Installations on vessels. The 40 page Circular can be accessed on the IMO website at: http://www.imo.org/includes/BlastDataOnly.asp/data_id%3D10750/32.pdf .

c. AIS Alarms have been noted due to improper GPS Hookup: In some installations, AIS alarms have been caused by improper sensor hookup. All of the sensors, GPS, heading data, and other devices require RS-422 connections (NMEA 0183, version 2.0 and above). Connection with other than RS-422 can cause alarms and intermittent operation of the equipment. Improper hookup could also damage the sensor and cause intermittent operation of other navigational equipment connected to the sensor. A converter or buffer converter from RS-232 to RS 422 should be available from the manufacturer.

d. Tugs fitting AIS may encounter 24 volt problem: It should be noted that 90% of the class A AIS equipments available require 24 volts DC at approximately 6 to 8 amps. Power converters are available from 12 to 24 volts DC and from 110/220 volts AC to 24 volts DC.

12. The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force: The Task Force agreed to meet next in St. Pete Beach, Florida on Thursday 19 May 2005 during the RTCM Annual Assembly.

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

6 January 2005

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

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