

## NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of January 4, 2007 Meeting

1. **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/](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 at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington VA on, Thursday morning 4 January 2007. The documents listed below were distributed and copies of most are available on the internet:

Coast Guard Rescue 21 Newsletter

Draft Task Force response to FCC NPRM on Part 80

BOATUS News Release on VHF-DSC Tutorial

MSC Circular on Annual Inspections for Voyage Data Recorders

Coast Guard Press Release on phase out of 121.5 MHz EPIRBs

NOAA/NMFS Reminder on Right Whale Protection Rules

2. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

a. **Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2.** Captain Len Ritter reported on this and related topics as follows:

1). Dave Fowler was introduced as the person who will be organizing the Coast Guard's program to complete the necessary upgrades to the coastal MF watch sites. As reported earlier, the MF-DSC equipment is largely in place but antenna upgrades needed to meet coverage standards are a significant cost item which will likely require several years to accomplish.

2). Captain Ritter also reported that the Coast Guard plans to conduct a market survey of the users of their various HF broadcasting services (voice, narrow band direct printing, and fax). This review is motivated by the aging inventory of HF transmitters and the difficulty of acquiring parts. A Federal Register announcement of the survey will be released soon and a response time of at least 60 days is anticipated.

3). The Coast Guard is also planning to introduce an Automated Digital Selective Calling Answering System (ADSCAS) facility for responding to HF-DSC test calls which would answer on 4 MHz only. This project is in response to a determination that 75-80% of the DSC calls received were for test purposes. In this connection, a question was raised as to the feasibility of creating an automated facility to acknowledge VHF-DSC test calls and the problem of there being no convenient way to test the distress alerting feature. Joe Hersey of the Coast Guard agreed to take the issue for action.

4). In response to a question, Capt Ritter and the FCC representative confirmed that 2182 kHz watch receivers could still be used if desired but were no longer required.

**b. Status Report on Rescue 21 VHF–DSC for Sea Area A1.** Captain Dan Abel provided an update briefing with the following highlights:

1). His new deputy was introduced; Navy Captain (Ret) Al Curry ([albert.curry@uscg.mil](mailto:albert.curry@uscg.mil)).

2). He distributed copies of the master schedule and confirmed that the Seattle–Port Angeles area had just been declared operational along with previous activations of the Atlantic City-Chincoteague area and the eastern Gulf of Mexico from Mississippi to southern Florida. A special deviation from the schedule will replace the Venice, LA installation which was lost in Hurricane Katrina.

3). The excellent performance of the new Direction Finding capability was also noted as having contributed to improved location of distress incidents and fast resolution of hoax cases.

**c. New Coast Guard Chief of the Office of Search and Rescue Introduced.** Captain Scott LaRochelle was introduced to the members and indicated his intention to be involved in the continuing work of the Task Force.

**d. Current Status of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS).** The discussion of AIS developments centered around the following issues, some of which were clarified after the meeting:

1). There has been some international progress in resolving limitations on the MMSI numbering system which identifies users of both DSC radio systems and AIS systems. The ITU has adopted new MMSI formats for mother vessels, survival craft, aircraft, and aids to navigation.

2). The long awaited promulgation of expansion of AIS carriage is the same as reported at the last meeting. Hopefully, the proposed rules will be published this spring.

3). The Coast Guard is also expected to outline the proposed requirement for Electronic Chart Display Systems to be used in conjunction with AIS. NOAA had planned to accelerate their program to complete vector-based electronic chart data but may not make their intended target date of late 2009 if budgetary resources are not adequate. The IEC is working on ECS standards but it is not clear what action the IMO will take relative to ECS and/or ECDIS for this purpose.

4). IMO regulations govern AIS fitting on SOLAS ships, administrations are responsible for developing their own regulations for vessels under 150 tons for any voyage, vessels under 500 tons on domestic voyages including fishing vessels, and other vessels operating only in near shore waters.

5). Good results were reported from initial testing of the Class B AIS units for use in SART applications. Better range was one of the test results. In response to a question as to costs, Class B Units were expected to cost less than \$1000.00 while Class A Units were in the range of \$4500.00.

6). A question was raised as to whether recreational vessels over 65 feet might be required to carry AIS? The MTSA and current AIS regulations are limited to “commercial” self-propelled vessels 65 feet or greater.

7). Another question related to whether the AIS carriage regulations were for all navigable waters or from the Baseline out? The intent of the program office is that the regulations apply to all navigable waters.

**e. Approval of Task Force Comment to FCC on Part 80 of the Rules.** The Task Force approved the draft comment provided for review with the addition of some language encouraging a more favorable treatment of mobile satellite systems other than Inmarsat in the Rules. The comment was filed on 8 January and will be posted on the website.

**f. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT).** Bill Cairns reported that the Maritime Safety Committee meeting in December decided that the International Maritime Satellite Organization (IMSO) would be designated as the LRIT coordinator even though the ratification process for the necessary changes to their charter could extend the start of the program beyond its desired target date. The U.S. has offered to build and operate the International LRIT Data Center on an interim basis but no decision has been made. The ad hoc LRIT Working Group will meet prior to the COMSAR meeting in February to further progress the technical specifications including the cost billing mechanism.

**g. Preparations for the IMO COMSAR Meeting 19-23 February.** Russ Levin outlined the various Agenda items and invited those interested to attend the SOLAS Working Group meeting that afternoon. Some of the issues of interest to the U.S. include a replacement for Narrow Band Direct Printing (NBDP), Revision of Resolution 888 on conditions for other Mobile Satellite Systems to participate in GMDSS, and completion of the LRIT specifications.

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

**a. Report and Order on Frequency Designation for AIS.** Ghassan Khalek noted that the comment period for this proceeding had closed and that a Report would be forthcoming soon.

**b. Report & Order and Third NPRM on Part 80 Proceedings.** Ghassan noted that comments on this proceeding would close on 8 January and acknowledged that there

may be further requests for comments if there is not enough information to take final action on all items.

**c. New Wireless Bureau Chief.** Ghassan noted that the long vacant position as Chief of the Wireless Bureau had been filled by Fred Campbell. The Task Force looks forward to inviting him to meet with us at a future meeting.

**d. National MMSI Policy Review.** This issue originated with a Task Force Petition to the FCC to permit recreational vessel operators to retain MMSI numbers already issued by BOATUS or Sea Tow when applying for a Station License. It has expanded to include other MMSI policy issues and to seek a consensus on whether Class B AIS Units should be activated by trained technicians. In a follow on meeting at the Coast Guard's Operations System Center (OSC) in Kearneysville West Virginia on Thursday, 11 January 2007 a number of database issues were highlighted:

1). All new registrations from Sea Tow were not in the MMSI database, OSC will work with Sea Tow to resolve the discrepancies. Other Assignment agencies may need to track their registrations as well.

2). The MMSI data retrieved from the OSC Database for SAR cases did not contain local contact information. OSC will modify the report format to include that data.

3). The ad hoc group sees the need for a master database accessible at least to registration agents and technicians and perhaps to the public as well for validation of their registration data. Both the FCC database and the OSC database are candidates for this function.

**4. The RTCM Report:** RTCM President Bob Markle reported that the 2007 RTCM Assembly will be at the Tradewinds Hotel in St. Pete Beach, Florida May 6-12, 2007. The RTCM has also prepared comments on the FCC's Part 80 proceeding. With respect to the issue of whether VHF-DSC handhelds should have integral GPS, the RTCM generally agrees but notes that more work needs to be done to develop technical specifications and offers the services of an RTCM Special Committee which has been doing related work on EPIRBs` and PLBs..

**5. Reports and Issues: The Recreational Vessel Group Report.** Elaine Dickinson led the discussion for the Recreational Vessel Group which included the following highlights:

**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 tutorial is posted on the BOAT US website at [www.boatus.com/mmsi](http://www.boatus.com/mmsi) and the BOAT US Foundation is producing 25,000 CD versions with further funding from the Coast Guard. These CD versions are primarily intended for manufacturers who agree to distribute them along with their DSC radios.

**b. MMSI Registrations.** BOAT US has registered about 36,000 vessels for MMSI numbers and continues to get requests from foreign vessels and requests for AIS registrations from vessels which have not yet gotten an MMSI number for DSC operation.

**c. Appeal to Boat Operators to Implement VHF-DSC.** As reported at earlier meetings, it appears that a significant number of the VHF radios in use have a Digital Selective Calling (DSC) capability but many of the owners have not yet applied for an MMSI number which is needed to implement the automated distress alerting feature of DSC. This situation has prompted the Task Force to recommend to the FCC that their Rules be changed to require that voluntary users of DSC radios register for an MMSI number and connect the radio to a navigation receiver if available.

**6. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group:** Ralph Sponar reported on the new Simplified Voyage Data Recorder (S-VDR). The recorder stores data for 12 hours or 3 incidents on a removable hot drive and on a submersible capsule. The required inputs are Date and Time, Position, Speed, Heading, Radar or AIS video data, and 9 Bridge Microphones including VHF Bridge to Bridge. Optional inputs include Depth, Bridge Alarms, Rudder Order & Response, Engine Order & Response, Hull Opening Status, Water Tight and Fire Door Status, Wind Speed & Direction, and Hull Distress Monitor. The system can be monitored on a laptop with proper software and is required to be certified annually. Vessels of 20,00 tons and greater must be equipped by 1 July 2009 and vessels of 3000 to 20,000 tons should be equipped by 1 July 2007 but no later than 2010.

**7. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group:** There were no issues discussed relative to the Commercial Vessels Group except to report that the Coast Guard RCC at Alameda, CA, designated to receive Ship Security Alerts from U.S. vessels, now uses the email address [ssas@uscg.mil](mailto:ssas@uscg.mil) for this purpose.

**8. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Training Group:** The Training Group Chairman, Owen Anderson had provided a separate comment to the FCC on the Part 80 Rule Making. The Task Force comment was modified to acknowledge and support the separate filing by the Training Group.

**9. The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force:** The Task Force agreed to meet next in St. Pete Beach, Florida during the RTCM Annual Assembly on Thursday morning 10 May 2007. A Draft Agenda for the January meeting is attached.

## GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

4 January 2007

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. Advocate intership calling on HF GMDSS channels (CV)
13. Recommend training programs for non-mandatory users of GMDSS systems (RV)
14. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
15. Recommend Class 'D' VHF-DSC as superior to RTCM SC-101 format (RV)
16. Advocate FCC enable R/Vs keep existing MMSI when applying for Station Lic. (RV)
17. Encourage Mfgs. to upgrade GMDSS explanations in equipment manuals (SA)
18. Recommend to FCC clarifications to their List of Approved GMDSS Equipment (SA)
19. Monitor guidelines for GMDSS equipment maintenance & maintainer standards (SA)
20. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)
21. 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

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

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