

NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of 5 January 2006 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 D.C. on 5 January 2006 at the RTCM office in Arlington, Virginia. The documents listed below were distributed and copies are available on request.

Summary record of Task Force meeting of 14 October 2005
Task Force Petition to FCC on Modifying ULS to accept existing MMSIs
Coast Guard Rescue 21 Press Release
Australia Marine Notice on Electronic Chart Systems
Australia Marine Notice on use of GPS and DGPS
USCG SAR Statistics

2. The Summary Record of the 14 October Task Force meeting was approved. A copy of the Summary Record is posted on the website.

3. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

a. Status Report on Rescue 21 – DSC for Sea Area A1. Captain Dan Abel, the new Chief of Acquisition for the Coastal VHF upgrade to DSC, briefed the Task Force on the status of this long delayed program. He confirmed earlier reports that Initial Operating Capability (IOC) had been achieved at Atlantic City NJ and Eastern Shore MD. He also confirmed the next stations on the schedule as St. Petersburg FL, Mobile AL, Seattle WA and Port Angeles WA. These stations are scheduled for completion in 2006 but he noted that delays could be expected at Mobile AL due to storm damage. Captain Abel anticipates that the remainder of the CONUS coastline should be completed by 2009 with the exception of the Great Lakes which are targeted for 2011. In response to a question, he confirmed that the Atlantic City and Eastern Shore stations would remain operational on VHF-DSC and would respond to alerts on channel 70. He was reluctant to encourage private vessels to make early use of DSC since the coverage area of those stations is not well known to the public but local area groups such as Coast Guard Auxiliary and Power Squadron vessels can probably utilize the local DSC service successfully.

b. Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2. Russ Levin reported that the needed upgrades were known and that funding had been requested but not yet provided. In response to a question, he confirmed that all stations were nominally operational on MF-DSC but that incomplete antenna system upgrades would limit the effective range. The goal for completion of the upgrades in the CONUS and Puerto Rico

is 2009-2010 depending on funding. In response to a question, Russ confirmed that the Kodiak Communications Station currently has and MF-DSC watch but that other Alaskan stations are not yet programmed for MF-DSC upgrades. The Hawaiian Communications Station also currently has an MF-DSC capability (remoted to the Point Reyes, California Master Communications Station). He further noted that the Coast Guard reorganization of Groups into Sectors involved some realignment of boundaries and Watchstanding arrangements with expected impact on leased line costs. The Coast Guard is developing an automated response to test calls on MF-DSC and the prototype system has been funded. This would greatly facilitate the required on-air testing of MF-DSC equipment by SOLAS vessels.

c. Current Status of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). Jorge Arroyo provided an update on AIS developments including the following highlights:

(1) A rule to expand AIS carriage requirements beyond VTS areas is forthcoming and will include certain tugs, fishing vessels, passenger vessels, and any other commercial vessels 65 feet or more - about 17,000 vessels. This program expansion is being jointly managed with the office responsible for Advanced Notice of Arrivals and Departures. The arrival and departure reports can be filed electronically but this mode is not mandatory. A new Interim Rule should be published by spring or summer this year.

(2) With respect to Electronic Chart Systems (ECS), The International Electro-technical Committee (IEC) should complete work on a proposed minimum standard in the next few months. Congress has imposed a deadline of 1 January 2007 for the Coast Guard to define requirements for electronic chart systems, and, has an expectation that it should also display AIS information.

(3) With respect to problems noted during AIS implementation, Jorge noted that error rates, regarding data entry, were on the order of 10% a year after carriage became mandatory. This is partly due to the user's inability to monitor what is his vessel is broadcasting and/or the tedious nature of some unit's AIS displays. Since the Coast Guard can only monitor vessel's AIS broadcasts in VTS areas and other limited areas, it is appropriate for vessels to notify other vessels of discrepancies noted. Although not a specific requirement, the Coast Guard welcomes inspection of AIS installations during the annual inspections by Classification Societies and GMDSS inspectors.

(4) With respect to AIS training Jorge noted that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has developed a Model Course but had not yet taken action to make the training mandatory. He expected that the duration of such a course if required in the U.S. would be on the order of a couple of days.

(5) The U.S. has submitted a paper to the next session of IMO's Communications, Search and Rescue Subcommittee (COMSAR) advocating that Class B AIS be accepted as an alternative to the requirement for SARTs on SOLAS vessels which are required by GMDSS. Similarly, integration of AIS into other equipments or to meet other needs can be expected in the future.

d. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT). Bob Markle summarized progress within the IMO structure aimed at developing a reporting system for vessels on the high seas to satisfy security requirements of administrations. There is a great deal of activity in this regard including intersessional meetings which are aimed at settling most technical requirements during the March meeting of the Communications, Search and Rescue Subcommittee. The parent Maritime Safety Committee meets in May and hopes to settle pending policy issues such as how far offshore to track vessels (proposals range from 200 to 2000 miles).

e. Coast Guard Requirements for Shipboard Security Plans. In response to a request from the Task Force, Burt Lahn made a presentation on shipboard security planning. The requirements for Ship Security Plans stem from the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) and the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS). There is a very extensive website including National Vessel Inspection Circulars (NVICs) relating to security on the Coast Guard website: www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mp/mtsa.shtml. The Coast Guard is responsible for insuring the adequacy of Security Plans for some 9200 domestic vessels and another 8000 foreign vessels which call at U.S. ports.

4. The FCC Reports:

a. Status of Part 80 Continuing Rule Making Proceedings. There has been no change since the last meeting with regard to the numerous outstanding items which are pending completion.

b. Emergency Authority to Activate Replacement Coast Stations. Ghassan Khalek reported that the FCC was able to help Sea Tow get temporary authority to activate new VHF Coast Stations in the Gulf following Hurricane KATRINA. Sea Tow indicated that they were able to activate 2 channels within 24 hours and were getting good ranges up to 100 miles. This proved very valuable to hurricane relief efforts in the area.

c. Bridge-to-Bridge Certificates of Compliance. Ghassan also reported that vessels subject to the Bridge-to-Bridge regulations need to have a copy of the Certificate showing compliance available for Coast Guard inspectors. The Bridge-to-Bridge Certificates can be found at www.fcc.gov/Forms/Form827/827.pdf.

d. Carryover 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. It was decided earlier that the Task Force should petition to have the ULS modified to accept these

existing MMSI's. The final version of the petition was distributed at the meeting and the petition has since been filed with the FCC.

5. The GMDSS Modernization Initiative. RADM Ed Gilbert provided a status report on the Task Force's initiative concerning GMDSS modernization. The Task Force approved most of the report by the ad hoc group at its August meeting and the October Summary Record outlined several items which were recommended to the FCC and the Coast Guard for consideration. Both the FCC and Coast Guard representatives indicated that they would take the Task Force recommendations under advisement without the need for further correspondence. The Modernization Group remains open to new suggestions from the membership and will continue its review of potential GMDSS updates for consideration by the Task Force.

The Task Force has discussed several times the utility of the Search and Rescue Transponder (SART); many believe it is of limited value compared to its expense. There are several alternatives discussed in papers submitted to the COMSAR Subcommittee of the IMO. Members of the Task Force will attend this meeting in March 2006 and they have agreed to provide us with a summary of the new proposals, the Subcommittee's reaction to them, and the decisions reached.

6. The RTCM Report: RTCM President Bob Markle reminded members that the 2006 RTCM Assembly will be in Newport Beach, California May 7-12. Other items include the following:

a. Standards for Above Deck Antennas. The RTCM Board agreed that this would be a worthwhile effort for study by a new Special Committee but the issue was tabled in the absence of a suitable Chairman and an agreed Terms of Reference. Since the issue is one of great complexity, it is doubtful whether such a study effort can go forward.

b. VHF Data Interface Standards. The RTCM Board approved this new study effort and designated the new subcommittee as SC-123. Interested parties may indicate to RTCM that they wish to be affiliated with this new effort.

c. RTCM Sponsorship of the GMDSS Task Force. The Task Force expressed its appreciation to the RTCM for its sponsorship and for hosting the meeting which was a refreshing improvement over meeting in security controlled government office space.

7. The Report of the GMDSS Training Group: The following training initiatives are currently active:

a. Ad hoc Group Review of Question Pools and FCC Regulations. Shortly after the meeting the ad hoc group made its final corrections and forwarded the revised Question Pool for both the ROC and the GOC licenses. These new Question Pools have been transmitted to the FCC and the Coast Guard and appropriate action is being taken to make the transition from the present versions. The Task Force expressed their thanks to

Owen Anderson for leading this initiative and to his ad hoc group members for their participation

b. Ad hoc Group to review GMDSS Maintainer Qualification. This Group has not been active in the last few months due to limited interest in the issue and the Task Force decided to place this initiative on inactive status.

8. The Report of the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group: Ralph Sponar reported that many mandatory vessels seemed unaware of the new reporting requirements for annual testing of EPIRBs and the 5 year requirements to replace battery and gaskets. A Certificate attesting to completion of these maintenance functions is often requested by Port State inspectors. It is usually necessary to take the EPIRB ashore to measure power output.

9. The Report of the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group: There were no new issues relating to the Commercial Vessel Group raised at the meeting.

10. The Recreational Vessel Group Report: Elaine Dickinson reported the following highlights for the Recreational Vessel Group:

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 who reports that it is essentially complete except for conversion to web site and CD format. A February completion date is expected.

b. NASBLA Draft Model Act on VHF and/or EPIRBs for all Vessels Going More than 1 Mile Offshore: The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) has drafted a Model Act which they will recommend to all coastal states. The model Act requires that all vessels going more than a mile offshore must carry a VHF Radio or an EPIRB. In the final version of the Model Act, a Marine Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) is an acceptable substitute for an EPIRB.

c. BOATUS MMSI Report: BOATUS has assigned MMSI numbers to 26,659 boats to date. They have also reregistered some boats which had previously registered with MariTEL which does not appear to still be actively issuing MMSI registrations.

d. 70% of VHF Radios in service have DSC capability. Elaine reported that the best estimate of VHF radios in service shows that about 70% have a DSC capability. It is evident that the vast majority of these have not yet applied for an MMSI number. The Task Force recommends that boaters not wait for the Coast Guard to complete Rescue 21 before activating DSC since there are a good number of VHF-DSC equipped vessels already standing watch on DSC channel 70 and these vessels can relay alerts to the Coast Guard including the exact position derived from a connected navigation receiver.

11. The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force: The Task Force agreed to meet next at the Hyatt Regency in Newport Beach, California on Thursday morning, 11 May 2006 during the RTCM Annual Assembly.

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

5 January 2006

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. Petition the FCC to let R/Vs keep existing MMSI when applying for Station Lic. (TF)
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 703-527-0484 or gmdss@comcast.net (note change in phone and further change to email beyond that reported in the prior Newsletter). If you have an Internet server with spam filters, please authorize receipt of messages from gmdss@comcast.net

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