

## NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of October 20th, 2006 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 during the NMEA annual meeting on October 20th, 2006 in Naples, Florida. The documents listed below were distributed and copies are available on request:

RTCM Summary of FCC Report & Order and further NPRM on Part 80  
Draft Task Force response to FCC NPRM on AIS  
Draft Task Force response to FCC NPRM on Part 80  
United Safe Boating Institute's Reprinted GMDSS Brochure

2. **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 discussed Report and Order 06-108 of 20 July 2006 resolving the pending issues on designation of channels for AIS communication in the U.S. The Commission designated VHF channels 87B and 88B for AIS use and raised further issues to be resolved in the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Responses to the NPRM were later determined to be due on 13 November and since the Task Force approved the draft response, it was filed officially on 5 November 2006. A copy will be placed on the website.

**b. Report & Order and Third NPRM on Part 80 Proceedings.** This Report clarified a number of issues which had been pending for some time including the following:

Continues channel 16 watch requirement indefinitely for all vessels  
Relieves VHF-DSC vessels from watch on 2182 kHz  
No vessels required to carry a separate 2182 watch receiver  
Simplifies log keeping and authorizes electronic log keeping  
Phases out RTCM 101 standard for VHF-DSC in favor of Class D  
Authorizes Inmarsat Fleet 77 for GMDSS  
Makes Operator Licenses good for lifetime of holder  
COSPAS-SARSAT beacons OK for SSAS if conforming to RTCM specs

**The Third NPRM raises the following issues, comment due 8 January 2007:**

Should FCC cease authorizing Inmarsat-E EPIRBs?

Should GPS capability be required in VHF-DSC handhelds?  
Should small passenger vessels without reserve power carry a VHF handheld?  
Is more spectrum needed for ship station Fax and Data on VHF voice channels?  
Should number of authorized channels for Private Coast Stations be limited?  
Should ship radar standards be updated to international standards?  
Should Subpart W vessels be required to test radiotelephones daily?

**d. Task Force Response to the Part 80 NPRM.** Jack Fuechsel introduced the Draft Task Force response to the FCC Report and Order and further Notice of Proposed Rule Making on Part 80 of the FCC Rules. There was general agreement to the draft in its present stage which was incomplete with respect to ship station transmission of data and facsimile on voice channels and adopting international Radar specifications. Input is desired from members of these issues. Please contact Jack Fuechsel with any input by mid December. This draft will appear on the agenda for the Task Force meeting on January 4<sup>th</sup> since comments are due to the FCC by 8 January 2007.

**e. 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. The FCC has not responded officially to the Petition but is working with a Task Force ad hoc group looking at other national issues related to MMSI policy and procedures. The ad hoc group has had two meetings in Washington and has scheduled a third meeting for 9 November at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington VA. A follow on meeting at the Coast Guard's Operations System Center (OSC) near Martinsburg West Virginia has been scheduled for Thursday, 11 January 2007.

**f. NMEA Collaboration with FCC on Privatization of Licensing.** Steve Spitzer of the NMEA outlined an initiative to work with the FCC to privatize testing and licensing with specific relation to the NMEA's C-MET qualifications for service technicians. They will report further as the program progresses. The Task Force expressed appreciation for the continuing support by the NMEA which will hold its next annual meeting in Amelia Island, Florida October 17-20, 2007.

### **3. The Coast Guard Reports:**

**a. Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2.** Russ Levin reported that the shore facilities still needed antenna upgrades and that the cost of providing them would extend the program for several years. Russ also reported that the Coast Guard plan 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. 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. Russ also reported that the Coast Guard was buying 2000 VHF-DSC radios for boats and cutters.

**b. Status Report on Rescue 21 VHF–DSC for Sea Area A1.** There was no direct report from the project office at this meeting but members are urged to follow implementation progress on the Rescue 21 website [www.uscg.mil/rescue21](http://www.uscg.mil/rescue21) and to contact the webmaster for the site if they desire to be put on distribution for periodic Newsletters and Press Releases.

**c. Current Status of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS).** LCDR Jim Rocco provided an update on AIS developments including the following highlights:

(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 new classes of vessels which will be required to fit AIS is the same as reported at the last meeting but it now appears that the documentation will not be released until after the first of the year.

(3) The Coast Guard is expected to outline the proposed requirement for Electronic Chart Display Systems to be used in conjunction with AIS since Congress has imposed a deadline of 1 January 2007 for definition of requirements. Congress expects that the requirements will include a display capability for AIS information since a display is needed for the mariner to realize the improved safety benefits of AIS. NOAA has accelerated their program to vectorize electronic chart data and hopes to complete the coastal areas by late 2009.

(4) Although the 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, fishing vessels, and other vessels operating only in near shore waters.

**e. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT).** RADM Gilbert provided an update on the recent meeting of the International Maritime Satellite Organization (IMSO) which was created to maintain governmental oversight of Inmarsat after that organization was privatized. IMSO is a candidate to oversee the collection and distribution of LRIT data and has indicated that they are prepared to undertake that role if the governments authorize expansion of their mandate and funding accordingly. The cumbersome procedures necessary to implement such changes are not likely to occur quickly. In the meantime the Coast Guard has offered the services of the AMVER Center as an interim Data Center until the IMO can complete new arrangements. The next opportunity for further development will be the IMO/MSC meeting in December.

**4. The RTCM Report:** RTCM President Bob Markle was unable to attend the meeting but appreciation was expressed for RTCM's support of the Task Force. The

2007 RTCM Assembly will be at the Tradewinds Hotel in St. Pete Beach, Florida May 6-12, 2007. The RTCM has a new initiative to encourage maritime organizations generally to be more pro-active in responding to FCC requests for comment. To that end they have contacted a number of other organizations, encouraging them to participate actively and offering assistance if needed. Individuals and corporations should also participate, not just Trade Associations and Non-profit Associations.

5. **The Recreational Vessel Group Report.** Jack Fuechsel 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 program developed by Chuck Husick has been completed and is posted on the BOATUS website [www.boatus.com/mmsi](http://www.boatus.com/mmsi). Members are encouraged to check it out and Companies are reminded that it is in the public domain and can be adapted for use with Company VHF-DSC products to help spread the word.

**b. New Coast Guard Study of Distress Alerting Alternatives.** Ms. Kathy Shea of the Coast Guard Research and Development Center briefed the group on a new initiative to improve the handling and timely relay of requests for assistance. Coast Guard data shows that about half of the requests for assistance are received by telephone, either directly from cell phones or relayed from 911 call centers or family and friends. Their aim is to review alternative technologies and to examine means to expedite getting the information to a Coast Guard unit positioned to respond. They intend to revisit policy in use of "StarCG" or "911" by cell phones and seek public response by direct input or through participation in planned workshops. Interested parties are invited to contact Michele Fitzpatrick at 860-884-1520 or via email to [mfitzpatrick@potomacmgmt.com](mailto:mfitzpatrick@potomacmgmt.com)

**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 is also of concern in pursuing the new study of Distress Alerting Alternatives mentioned above. The Task Force reminds all members to encourage boat operators to register for an MMSI number with BOATUS or Sea Tow and connect the DSC Radio to a GPS receiver to ensure that an accurate position is automatically transmitted along with the distress alert.

**d. United Safe Boating Institute GMDSS Brochure Updated.** Copies of a reprinted GMDSS Brochure were distributed courtesy of the Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety. Modest quantities may be requested from Mr. Joeseph Carro, 202-267-1263, or by email to [jcarro@comdt.uscg.mil](mailto:jcarro@comdt.uscg.mil).

6. **The Report of the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group:** The only issue from this Group which had been planned for discussion relates to the new

Simplified Voyage Data Recorder (S-VDR). Since the invited briefer was unable to attend, it will be rescheduled for the January meeting.

7. **The Report of the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group:** There were no issues discussed relative to the Commercial Vessels Group.

8. **The Report of the GMDSS Training Group:** There were no issues discussed relating to the Training Group.

9. **The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force:** The Task Force agreed to meet next at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia at 9:30 am on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2007. This day is also the meeting date for the SOLAS Working Group preparing for the next COMSAR meeting which will meet in the same room at 1:00 pm that afternoon. The follow-on Task Force meeting will be 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**

20 October 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. 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 Mfrs. 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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