

NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of May 8, 2008 Meeting

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/ (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 and other issues in marine telecommunications.

The GMDSS Task Force met at the Catamaran Hotel in San Diego, California during the annual Assembly of the Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services (RTCM). The documents listed below were distributed and are available on request:

Draft Comment to USCG on Fishing Vessel Safety Regulations due 29 July
Updated Status Report on ad hoc group on Annual GMDSS Inspections
Coast Guard Press Release on Retention of HF Broadcasts
Dept. of Homeland Security Press Release on Role of eLoran
Coast Guard Terminating HF Radiotelex, Amver & Obs at Camslant & Kodiak
Coast Guard Reminder to Check EPIRBs and Replace 121 MHz Beacons
Coast Guard Final Rule on Long Range Identification & Tracking (LRIT)
Gilbert Paper on GMDSS Functional Requirements and Modernization
Coast Guard Rescue 21 Status Report to the Task Force

1. **Summary Record of October 19, 2007 Meeting:** The Summary Record of the 9 January, 2008 meeting which had been distributed earlier, was noted without correction.

2. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

a. **Results of the IMO Comsar 12 Meeting.** Captain Len Ritter summarized the recently completed meeting of IMO's Communications, Search and Rescue Subcommittee. The highlights are as follows:

1). **GMDSS Master Plan.** This is the IMO's Master List of GMDSS Shore Facilities which is updated annually. The U.S. listings require some adjustment.

2). **Arctic Navareas.** The IMO is introducing several new Navareas to cover the Arctic Ocean for broadcasts of Maritime Safety Information (MSI) now that receding ice cover is enabling seasonal Arctic navigation.

3). **Security Broadcasts in Port Areas.** The need for additional security broadcasts in port areas is being studied at the invitation of ITU which recognized the potential for new service requirements and invited input from IMO.

4). **Spectrum Related Needs.** Items such as new security broadcasts and expanding interest in data transmissions will probably lead to needs for additional

spectrum as will any other new services which cannot be accommodated in the existing maritime spectrum allocations. A continuing effort is also required to retain existing allocations when use of older services decline

5). AMVER Commended. This is the 50th anniversary of AMVER, the Coast Guard's voluntary vessel tracking system which has proved so helpful in locating ships in position to assist other vessels. The Comsar Subcommittee took notice of this event and there were many congratulatory statements placed in the record.

6). IAMSAR Manual. The meeting approved several amendments to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual. This manual is kept up to date with frequent amendments.

7). Joint ICAO/IMO Working Group. This joint working group has proven very useful in harmonizing the requirements of the two mobile services and enables them to present a united front at ITU meetings. Another joint working group meeting is scheduled for June of this year.

8). Liaison Statement to ITU. Although each administration is free to make submissions on its own to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), it has been found that a liaison statement from the IMO to the ITU on matters of general agreement is helpful in achieving maritime goals.

b. Status of MF-DSC Coastal Network Upgrade to DSC for Sea Area A2. Russ Levin explained that the status of upgrading for MF-DSC ashore is essentially unchanged while waiting for a business case analysis due in June and completion of a requested propagation analysis due in August. The possible outcomes are repairing existing antenna deficiencies, improving antenna systems for full coverage, and retaining MF-DSC only in selected areas.

c. Status Report on Rescue 21 VHF-DSC for Sea Area A1. CDR Al Arsenault of the Rescue 21 Program, provided a comprehensive update briefing noting that in response to a Task Force request, Sector MMSI numbers were being posted on the Rescue 21 website (www.uscg.mil/rescue21) as each is activated. MMSIs for individual stations are not listed since the channel 70 watch is maintained at Sector headquarters. By the end of 2008, all 14 Sectors in Group I will have been activated providing DSC coverage of over 25,000 miles of coastline. The 9 Sectors in Group II should be completed by 2010 essentially completing Conus coastal coverage. Group III with 7 Sectors consisting of the islands (Hawaii, Puerto Rico & Guam) should be complete by 2012. The final Group IV of 5 Sectors consisting of the Great Lakes, Western Rivers, and Alaska (SE and Anchorage) along with remaining vessels should be complete by 2017.

d. Automatic Identification System (AIS). Jorge Arroyo provided an update on the pending Rulemakings. The LRIT final Rules were released recently and take effect by 31 December of this year. The AIS Rulemaking has been under development for 2 years

but should be released this summer. The other Rulemaking to implement other SOLAS Chapter V requirements is still under development but could be released later this year.

e. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT). Larry Solomon provided a status report on the implementation plans for the LRIT. As noted above, the final Rules implementing LRIT for U.S. ships have been released. The U.S. is building an interim International Data Exchange (IDE) at the invitation of IMO since there is significant international interest in implementing an LRIT system and there were no other options available for this critical element of the system. The International Mobile Satellite Organization (IMSO), has been appointed LRIT Coordinator, responsible for performance review and audit functions; however, IMSO does not have funding available for this purpose although a few countries have offered to provide some advance funding. It is not clear which countries or regions may build national or regional data centers although the European Union has announced plans to build a regional center. Governments, not individual ships will pay for the ship reports which are estimated to cost about \$1.00/ship/day.

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

a. Status of Class B AIS Devices. The Task Force was once again extremely disappointed to find that FCC approval of the Class B devices has still not been granted. The Coast Guard approval was granted months earlier and the FCC approval has been pending since before the October 2007 Task Force meeting. There is no apparent reason for the delay which is lodged in the Commissioner's Office. The extended delay is hurting U.S. manufacturers of the device and inhibiting improved safety by delaying the installation on U.S. vessels.

b. Petition for Reconsideration Submitted by Andersons. Kurt and Owen Anderson submitted a lengthy Petition for Reconsideration of the FCC Rules to eliminate errors and contradictions in the Rules. This request was put out for public comment and both the Task Force and the Coast Guard responded concurring with the changes recommended. The FCC has not yet acted but it seems likely that the request will receive favorable consideration.

c. FCC Response to Task Force Petition and Recommendations on MMSI Policy. The substance of the Task Force Petition was put out for public comment for which the closing date was shortly following our October meeting. 591 Comments were received, all supporting the Task Force position. The FCC has not yet announced their decision on the Task Force recommendations on MMSI Policy but we hope to have more progress by the August 2008 meeting.

4. The RTCM Report: RTCM President Bob Markle reported on several issues as follows:

a. Activity of RTCM SC 101/110 on Incorporating GPS in VHF Handhelds.

The handheld envisioned might be required of a few vessels such as small passenger vessels without reserve power but would otherwise be used by a largely voluntary group of vessels. The committee has decided that a new class of VHF radio is needed to identify a portable with DSC and incorporating a GPS receiver. Initial review is concentrating on the Class D standard but with selected simplifications in order to keep the cost down.

b. Activity of RTCM SC-121 on Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). This committee is reviewing expanded use of the AIS record messaging system for possible applications such as broadcasting of weather and other security and environmental information. A Working Group of the Special Committee is concentrating on expanded use of AIS in Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) areas and will conduct trials in the Tampa Bay area.

c. Activity of RTCM SC-127 on eLoran. E Loran is an enhanced Loran relying on precise timing and no longer needing to operate in 'chains'. It is being strongly advocated in Europe and has recently been designated as the U.S. system to provide back up for GPS. The Committee has decided that two new standards are needed, one to define the eLoran signal in space and another to set a standard for an eLoran receiver. The Committee has held 4 meetings and will meet again on August 6th at RTCM in Virginia.

d. Other RTCM Announcements of Interest. The 2009 RTCM Assembly including a Task Force meeting will be at the Tradewinds Hotel in St. Pete Beach, Florida May 2-9, 2009.

5. GMDSS Modernization Initiative. Admiral Ed Gilbert reported as follows:

a. New Paper on Functional Requirements and Modernization. Admiral Gilbert introduced a new paper outlining the GMDSS Functional Requirements and efforts to date on modernization of the System. All Task Force members are encouraged to contribute suggestions to Admiral Gilbert for consideration under the modernization initiative. He can be reached at 703-241-2592 or by email at gilbinc@aol.com

1). Functional Requirements. The group did not see any likelihood of eliminating any of the GMDSS functional requirements but agreed that consideration should be given to adding a new one calling for interoperability between SOLAS vessels and non-SOLAS vessels. This has been provided primarily through retention of the channel 16 VHF watch on SOLAS vessels for interoperability with non-SOLAS vessels.

2). GMDSS Modernization. The successful changes approved by IMO included Paperless Navtex receivers and the AIS SART alternative. Recent proposals in the IMO Comsar Subcommittee to phase out Narrow Band Direct Printing (NBDP) and introduce HF Email were not accepted. A U.S. paper advised Comsar of our success in Direction Finding on the EPIRB 406 MHz signal and Sweden reported on successful use of AIS by rescue swimmers and helicopters.

b. Developments in E Navigation. This is a new initiative which the Task Force is following. “E Navigation” encompasses a variety of integrated digital applications including electronic chart displays and an enhanced Loran service termed eLoran. The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) is developing a ‘vision’ for E Navigation and two IMO Subcommittees (Radionavigation and Communications, Search & Rescue) have established work programs including a Correspondence Group to work between sessions. A significant development since our last meeting is the adoption of eLoran as an officially sanctioned backup for GPS.

6. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group:

Ralph Sponar and Rich Beattie moderated the discussion on the new ad hoc group established to review policy and procedures related to the annual GMDSS inspection. An updated outline of the proposed effort was distributed at the meeting and emailed to other members of the group. One of the primary objectives was to update the forms used for the annual inspection since the FCC forms are out of date. The American Bureau of Shipping (ABS) has offered to let their forms be used for this purpose which is attractive since they are kept up to date and are available on line (see www.eagle.org). Other issues to be reviewed include qualifications of inspectors, and inspections of non-SOLAS vessels. The ad hoc group plans to schedule a Washington meeting following the August Task Force meeting or earlier, if appropriate.

7. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group: The new ad hoc group to review mandatory radio requirements for small fishing vessels had been waiting to review a joint response from the Coast Guard and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to Congress explaining the potentially overlapping requirements for AIS and VMS. This has not yet been made available to the Task Force.

On 31 March 2008, the Coast Guard released an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rule Making (ANPRM) inviting comments on a wide range of fishing vessel safety issues. The comment period closes on the ANPRM 29 July 2008. A draft comment covering all Task Force concerns on radio safety matters was presented to the Task Force for discussion. The Group felt that it would be timely to also present the issue to the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Advisory Committee (CFIVSAC) meeting in New Orleans 28-30 May 2008. The presentation at the CFIVSAC was made by Rich Beattie and Larry Yarbrough and the CFIVSAC adopted the following recommendation:

Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Advisory Committee Recommendations 30 May 2008:

- For all distress alerting communications equipment, it is mandatory that emergency (battery) power be employed to provide operations following generator failures.
- All new VMS fittings should include GMDSS distress alerting functionality (or equal), full two way data communications, and MSI capabilities (or similar services).
- All new EPIRBs fitted should include an integral GPS receiver to permit automatic inclusion of position in the distress alert

- GMDSS rules require additional radio equipment in lifeboats or life rafts including a Search and Rescue Transponder (SART) or a recently approved alternative, the Automatic Identification System (AIS) SART, and VHF portable radios for on scene communications. The Task Force believes that larger fishing vessels should carry at least minimal survival craft electronics.
- All CFVs should have at least one waterproof VHF-FM handheld radio fitted plus one extra battery, but not required to be loaded into life rafts.
- For vessels required to fit MF/HF SSB equipment, there must be a capability to receive weather appropriate to the area of operation. This could include weather fax receivers and/or Navtex receivers.
- All CFVs fitted with a fixed mount VHF-DSC should have the transceiver properly registered with MMSI issuing authorities and GPS position input.
- All CFVs operation beyond 100 NM should fit a MF/HF SSB transceiver with DSC capabilities, licensed by the FCC, and connected to a GPS receiver for position input.
- These equipment changes should be required at either equipment replacement or no later than 10 years from the date of the Regulations.
- Size of the vessel should be considered in determining equipment requirements.

An announcement will be sent to all Task Force members alerting those representing commercial fishing interests, of the proposed regulatory filing and inviting their input on the final draft which will be submitted by 29 July 2008. This announcement will include the draft comments provided to the Task Force and the CFIVSAC and the recommendations from CFIVSAC. Any Task Force members desiring to participate in this fine tuning of the Task Force comment should advise Jack Fuechsel. The draft Task Force comment and the CFIVSAC recommendation will also be placed on the Task Force website for ready access by members.

8. Reports and Issues: The Recreational Vessel Group Report. Chuck Husick reported for the Recreational Vessel Group as follows:

a. Boat US Report on Operational Issues. Chuck reported that the Boat US Foundation's EPIRB rental program had been very successful with a number of rescues. There have been occasions when a Coast Guard operator called Boat US rather than the Coast Guard Database to decode an MMSI number. There is still a problem getting VHF-DSC users to register for an MMSI and connect a GPS receiver. The proposed Task Force Press Release approved earlier may not have had as much impact as hoped since the Coast Guard turned it into a Safety Alert and broadened the scope to include AIS.

b. San Diego Auxiliary Promotes VHF-DSC. Joe Stevens and Jim Davis of the Coast Guard Auxiliary in San Diego reported on their efforts to promote registering for an MMSI number for VHF-DSC users and connecting the radio to a GPS receiver. They use a portable demonstration unit and have briefed many yacht club groups in addition to Auxiliary units. Their demo unit had an older SC-101 radio which required two steps to

send a distress alert (hold down red button for 5 seconds, then press “SEND”). Most newer VHF-DSC Radios do not require the second step.

c. Power Squadrons Now Assigning MMSI Numbers. The U.S. Power Squadrons (USPS) are now assigning MMSI Numbers along with BOAT US and Sea Tow. Their website is www.usps4mmsi.com.

9. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Training Group: The only item of interest to this group is to note that the Coast Guard’s National Maritime Center (NMC) which manages examinations continues to have an obsolete 2001 version of the GMDSS Question Pools posted on their website. We will redouble efforts to have them post the later 2006 version and notify training institutions of availability of the newer version.

10. The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force: The Task Force agreed to meet next on Tuesday morning 5 August 2008 at the RTCM headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The GMDSS Inspection ad hoc group will probably meet in the afternoon. The follow-on meeting of the Task Force will be on 3 October 2008 in San Diego during the annual meeting of the National Marine Electronics Association (NMEA).

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

8 May 2008

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. Recommend updates for Coast Guard NVIC on GMDSS Requirements (TF)
13. Advocate intership calling on HF GMDSS channels (CV)
14. Review Safety Radio and VMS Requirements for Small Fishing Vessels (CV)
15. Recommend training programs for non-mandatory users of GMDSS systems (RV)
16. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
17. Recommend Class ‘D’ VHF-DSC as superior to RTCM SC-101 format (RV)
18. Advocate FCC enable R/Vs keep existing MMSI when applying for Station Lic. (RV)
19. Encourage Mfgs. to upgrade GMDSS explanations in equipment manuals (SA)
20. Monitor guidelines for GMDSS equipment maintenance & maintainer standards (SA)
21. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)
22. Advocate better FCC & USCG management of annual GMDSS inspections (SA)
23. 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

Attachment: Draft Agenda for Task Force Meeting 5 August 2008 at RTCM in VA.

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

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