

NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of October 3, 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 in San Diego, California during the Annual Meeting of the National Marine Electronics Association (NMEA). The documents listed below were distributed and are available on request:

Updated Draft Comment to Coast Guard on F/V Safety Radio Regulations
Updated Check Lists from ad hoc group on Annual GMDSS Inspections
RTCM analysis of FCC Report & Order on AIS B and other issues
Gilbert Paper for COMSAR 13 on GMDSS Modernization
Rescue 21 handouts showing progress in the Conus and projections for Alaska

1. **Summary Record of 5 August 2008 Meeting:** The Summary Record of the 5 August, 2008 meeting which had been distributed earlier, was noted.

2. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

a. Status of MF-DSC Coastal Network Upgrade to DSC for Sea Area A2.

Russ Levin gave an update on the Coast Guard study for upgrading the MF-DSC coastal network. The decision options include repairing existing Sector sites; upgrading existing Sector sites and closing coverage gaps, or discontinuing 2 MHz watch at the Sectors and guarding all six International Telephony Distress Frequencies and MF/HF DSC frequencies from the CAMS and COMMSTAs. If the latter option is chosen, it would mean closing the 2 MHz services at the Sectors including the 2182 kHz watch.

b. Status Report on Rescue 21 VHF-DSC for Sea Area A1. Jack Fuechsel reported for the Rescue 21 Program. New handouts were distributed showing progress in the Conus Sectors and planning for the Alaskan coastline. A question was raised as to whether the Coast Guard would declare Sea Area A1 operational as major sections of the coastline are completed? Since work is progressing simultaneously on the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific coasts, a more likely scenario is declaration of Sea Area A1 for the Conus which could be made by the end of 2010 without waiting for total system completion in Alaska and the inland waters in about 2017.

c. Automatic Identification System (AIS). Jorge Arroyo provided an update on AIS implementation planning as follows;

1.) Just before the meeting, the FCC issued Report & Order WT-04344 which

authorized AIS Class B for U.S. vessels. This eliminated a major concern of the Task Force which had written letters to both the Coast Guard and the FCC Commissioners in an attempt to break the impasse.

2.) It appears that the long awaited Coast Guard Rule Making extending AIS carriage requirements to other classes of vessels is at OMB and hopefully will be released soon. We will look forward to reviewing its provisions at the next Task Force meeting.

3.) Jorge reviewed the results of sea trials conducted in the UK with the new AIS SART which is giving detection ranges far beyond radar SART and up to 36 nautical miles to aircraft flying at an altitude of 2500 feet.

4.) The National AIS shore monitoring program is proceeding with most major ports and critical waterways already equipped with receive capability. The next phase will fill in gaps in coastal coverage and provide transmit capability out to 24 miles offshore and the final phase, based on satellite detection, should give ranges out to 2000 miles.

5.) In response to a question, Jorge stated that there were no plans to require an annual inspection of AIS equipment mandatorily installed on U.S. vessels.

6.) The Task Force has been interested in 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 response was released just before the meeting and can be reviewed on the Task Force website (See Summary Record at top).

d. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT). Jorge Arroyo and other provided an update on LRIT implementation. Ships are required to be equipped for LRIT participation by 31 December 2008 or by the date of their next required annual Radio Survey. The development of the Interim International Data Exchange (IDE) is progressing on schedule at the Coast Guard's Operations System Center in West Virginia. No information was available as to whether other National and Regional Data Centers were on schedule.

e. SOLAS Working Group to Prepare for COMSAR 13. Russ Levin reminded members of the U.S. Delegation that COMSAR 13 papers were being distributed as received and that the first preparatory meeting was scheduled for 15 October at RTCM. He offered to add other interested parties to the distribution list

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 pleased that FCC Report and Order WT-04344 had been issued authorizing Class B AIS devices for U.S. vessels. Other decisions in the document designated channel 87B for AIS throughout the U.S. and

determined that only federal entities will be permitted to transmit from shore. The Report and Order was released on 19 September and will become effective 30 days after publication in the federal register.

b. FCC Response to Task Force Petition and Recommendations on MMSI Policy. The substance of the Task Force Petition of 21 May 2007 was put out for public comment for which the closing date was shortly following our October 2007 meeting. 591 Comments were received, all supporting the Task Force position. The FCC has not yet announced their decision on the Task Force petition but it is believed that they are prepared to implement the recommendations calling for validation of current MMSI registrations. Those recommendations which require changes to the Universal Licensing System (ULS) may take more time. We hope to have more to report by the January 2009 meeting.

c. Further Part 80 Rule Making. There were no further developments on outstanding items expected to be addressed in Part 80. This will include extensive rule changes suggested by Owen and Kurt Anderson to resolve inconsistencies.

d. Recap of FCC Operator and Station Licenses. Ghassan summarized the various licenses issued as follows:

GMDSS Operator and Maintainer	1379
GMDSS Maintainer alone	828
General Radiotelephone	61,465
Coast Station Licenses	5932
Ship Station Licenses	70,903
Recreational and voluntary vessels	54,910
Voluntary Ship Licenses (SA)	29,908
Mandatory Ship Licenses (SB)	13,977

4. The NOAA/NWS Report: Tim Rulon reported for the Weather Service as follows: The Weather Service is developing new broadcast programs in cooperation with Canada to cover the new Arctic NAV/MET areas created by the IMO to recognize that ships are beginning to operate in the Arctic routinely now that the ice is receding.

5. 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 by the Special Committee has been recommended to the ITU as a new category, tentatively identified as Class H. At the same time the IMO has gone on record in a recommendation to ITU that Class D radios should be simplified. Another initiative of SC-110 is to consider replacing the 121 MHz homing beacon in an EPIRB with AIS for improved range of detection. A paper on this proposal will go COMSAR 13.

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 NOAA PORTS data, 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 envisions a receiver which will operate on both Loran and GPS.

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 3-9, 2009.

6. GMDSS Modernization Initiative. One of the papers distributed for this meeting was a draft U.S. input to COMSAR 13 urging that GMDSS Modernization become a continuing work assignment. Since new work efforts must be approved by the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), a similar paper will go to that group urging that the new Work Program for COMSAR be approved.

7. Briefing on the Mobile Satellite Ventures (MSV) Program: Mr. Austin Comerton of MSV briefed the group on the capabilities of their system. Highlights included the following:

a. Space System. The MSV system uses two L band geostationary satellite to cover North America, the Caribbean, and the Hawaiian Islands. New High powered spot beam satellites are in production with delivery dates of late 2008 and mid 2009.

b. User equipment will feature both cellular and satellite capability. Qualcomm is developing chip sets for MSV that will enable both modes so that cheaper cellular service can be used when within coverage. Both telephony and broadband service will be provided and GPS tracking will be standard.

c. Mobile Services may utilize 16 dedicated Talk Groups. Each Talk Group can accommodate 9999 users and they are dedicated to such categories as Public Safety, Public Health & Medical, National Security, and vessel fleets. One such vessel fleet is the Alaskan fishing Fleet which has over 1400 vessels enrolled.

8. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group: Rich Beattie has done an excellent job of updating and compiling the GMDSS Inspection Check Sheets in a computer manageable form. The FCC has accepted the new Check sheets for GMDSS Inspections on SOLAS vessels and Small Passenger Vessels and they have been posted on the FCC website at <http://www.fcc.gov/eb/ShipInsp/> Links have been established from the Coast Guard Telecommunications website and the Task Force

website. We would also like to pay tribute the George Dillon's impending retirement from the FCC at the end of the year. George had been of great help in finalizing the Inspection Check List issue and had made many important contributions to the maritime community over the years.

9. Reports from the Commercial Vessel Group. Jack Fuechsel introduced an updated draft comment to the Coast Guard recommending emergency radio outfitting of small fishing vessels. The earlier draft had been approved at the May meeting but had not yet been filed since the Coast Guard has extended the reply date from 29 July to 15 December 2008. The final comment was edited to incorporate the positions of the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Advisory Committee (CFIVSAC) and was approved by the Task Force at the 3 October meeting.

9. Reports and Issues: The Recreational Vessel Group Report. Chuck Husick reported that the recreational boating community continues to be of the opinion that it is very important to get the management of MMSI numbers under strict control, especially with the expected influx of AIS transceivers using the same MMSI numbers. Boat US has instituted a quality control program which strives to keep their part of the database up to date. Email messages are sent to the holders of MMSI registrations to verify that the data is still correct. Those which bounce back are sent letters to update their listings.

Jim Davis and Joe Stevens of the San Diego Coast Guard Auxiliary spoke to the group and demonstrated the portable V HF-DSC exhibit which they take to Boat Shows, Yacht Clubs, etc. This Auxiliarist team has done an outstanding job of sensitizing the boating public to the need to install an MMSI number, connect the radio to a GPS receiver and emphasizing the importance of reading the manual for correct operation. Our initiative to encourage these actions by the boating public would be greatly enhanced if similar promotional programs were adopted in all boating areas.

10. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Training Group: Both the FCC and the Coast Guard's National Maritime Center have the latest version of the GMDSS Question Pools posted on their websites and there are currently no training issues outstanding.

11. The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force: The next Task Force meeting will be held on Thursday morning 8 January 2009 at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The follow on meeting will be held Thursday morning 7 May 2009 during the RTCM Annual Meeting in St. Pete Beach, Florida

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

3 October 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. Encourage voluntary users of VHF-DSC Register for MMSI and connect GPS (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 8 January 2009 at RTCM in Arlington, Virginia.

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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