

NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of January 8, 2009 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 Arlington, Virginia at the RTCM Headquarters. The documents listed below were distributed and are available on request:

RTCM summary of USCG Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on AIS & NAIS
Coast Guard Summary of AIS Change proposals in the new NPRM
Coast Guard handout summarizing changes in the AIS NPRM
Rescue 21 handouts showing progress in the Conus, Western Rivers & Alaska
Updated Gilbert Paper for COMSAR 13 on GMDSS Modernization
Draft Task Force Issue Paper on MMSI Policy

1. **Summary Record of 3 October 2008 Meeting:** The Summary Record of the 3 October, 2008 meeting which had been distributed earlier, was noted.

2. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

a. Introduction of RDML David Glenn. The Task Force was pleased to welcome the Coast Guard's Chief of Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Information and New Technology, RDML David Glenn who addressed the group regarding Coast Guard planning in the various telecommunications technologies. He was highly complimentary regarding the work program and accomplishments of the RTCM and the GMDSS Task Force. Admiral Glenn stayed for the whole meeting and participated in the discussions.

b. Automatic Identification System (AIS). Bob Markle reviewed the RTCM summary of the Coast Guard's recently released Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) on AIS. The proposed new Rules were pretty much as expected adding over 17,000 vessels to mandatory carriage of AIS. The following are highlights of the new proposed requirements which are open for comment:

1.) The deadline for comment on the NPRM is 15 April 2009 and the Task Force plans to comment, see 7) below. The Coast Guard plans to hold a public meeting in Washington on 5 March 2009 from 12:30 to 3:00 pm in room 2415 at Coast Guard Headquarters at 2100 Second Street SW; Washington DC 20593. Parking is limited and a government issued photo ID is required for entry.

2.) The proposed rulemaking will amend and expand upon the current

requirements to include vessels navigating outside of Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) areas and those previously exempted (fishing vessels and small passenger vessels), and adds certain other vessels, such as dredges/floating plants, high speed passenger vessels, and those moving certain dangerous cargos.

3). It extends SOLAS AIS requirements (i.e. external GNSS, gyro, and rate of turn inputs) to domestic vessels over 500 GT, and permits all other vessels categories to utilize approved Class B AIS units; with the proviso that they may not be suitable for highly maneuverable vessels, high speed vessels, or vessels operating in congested areas in close quarters situations with other AIS equipped vessels. The Coast Guard accordingly seeks comment on whether the use of Class B AIS units should be further prescribed.

4.) Although periodic inspections are not required, vessels are responsible for ascertaining that the AIS units and associated equipment are operating properly and upkept (which includes system upgrades). The functionality and display of AIS information must be located near the conning position.

5.) Regulations will be effective 30 days after publication, but allow up to 7 months for new installations.

6.) The Task Force plans to file comments and asked the MMSI Policy ad hoc group to take the lead. Several of those present asked to be added to the group and other members who wish to join the ad hoc group should advise Jack Fuechsel. Since the comments are due before the next full Task Force meeting, the ad hoc group will approve the final version.

7). A question was raised as to when we could expect the next step in ECDIS carriage requirements. Since SOLAS amendments are involved, a minimum of two reviews by the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) are required and the earliest approval would thus be MSC 86 in May 2009.

8). The Coast Guard announced that they were conducting tests of the AIS SART off Key West. Subsequent to the meeting we learned that they were achieving ranges of 119-132 nm from an altitude of 20,000 feet; 84-97 nm from 10,000; 59-79 nm from 5,000 feet, and 28-65 nm from 1000 feet.

c. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT). CDR Kevin Keast and LCDR Chris Shivery provided an in depth briefing on the history and status of LRIT with the following highlights:

1). The number of U.S. flag vessels required to participate is estimated at 450-750. Since the requirement for LRIT compliance is keyed to the GMDSS inspection renewal date, ships worldwide will phase in to the system throughout calendar year 2009.

2). The Coast Guard provided interim International Data Exchange (IDE) was

completed on schedule in July and our National Data Center (NDC) was completed in October. Countries must notify IMO that they intend to participate. If they don't participate, their ships aren't required to transmit data until June 2009.

3). Participating countries must contract with an Application Service Provider (ASP), a collection point for vessel reports and forwarding to the NDC. The ASP is also responsible for conformance testing of candidate LRIT systems. Designation of a U.S. ASP is expected soon. Canada has designated Pole Star as their ASP.

4). A new National Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 08-01 on LRIT is nearly ready for release but is being held up pending designation of the U.S. ASP. Equipment used for LRIT requires type acceptance. There are currently no type accepted LRIT systems in the U.S. except for those already type accepted for GMDSS which can also provide the required LRIT functionality.

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

Captain Rambo gave an update on the Coast Guard study for upgrading the MF-DSC coastal network. The decision on how to proceed is still pending but expected within the next few months. As reported in October, 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 MF/HF 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.

e. Status Report on Rescue 21 VHF-DSC for Sea Area A1. Captain Lisa Festa was introduced as the new manager for the Rescue 21 Program. Handouts were distributed showing progress in the Conus Sectors and planning for the Western Rivers and Alaska. There are now some 25,000 miles of coastline covered by the upgraded Rescue 21 system. One operational problem was noted by Chuck Husick in that the Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg operators would respond to a voice call but not to a DSC call proposing a working channel for reply. This was resolved after consultation but may be a problem elsewhere. Under the Maritime Domain Awareness concept, the Coast Guard has requested that boaters report suspicious activities and hailing the Sector on DSC has more inherent privacy than making a voice call on channel 16.

f. Working Group Preparations for COMSAR 13. Russ Levin reported that Comsar 13 would meet in London on 19 January. That meeting is now completed and we can report the following results:

1.) The U.S. interest in a handheld VHF-DSC radio with integral GPS moved ahead with a supportive liaison statement from IMO to ITU which will develop specifications.

2.) The U.S. interest in accepting an EPIRB with and AIS transmitted for local homing as an alternative to an EPIRB with a 121.5 MHz homing signal drew mixed

reviews. Most recognized the superior performance but others noted the widespread capability of homing on 121.5 MHz by aircraft and worried about the cost of adding AIS capability to aircraft. An EPIRB with both AIS and 121.5 MHz homers was considered too bulky, too expensive, and too power hungry

3.) GMDSS Modernization was not discussed since it was not formally on the agenda but corridor discussions were supportive and a proposal has gone to MSC 86 to place the issue on the agenda for Comsar 14 expected to be held 8-12 March 2010.

4.) New Arctic NavMet areas were approved and broadcasting of Marine Safety Information to those areas by SafetyNET and HF NBDP will be conducted as a trail in 2009 and 2010.

5.) Iridium announced intent to apply for GMDSS certification, a process which will take some time to complete including sponsorship by a government member. The group seemed to welcome the prospect of GMDSS coverage in the polar areas.

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

a. Further Part 80 Rule Making. There were no further developments on outstanding items expected to be addressed in Part 80. We can hopefully expect further action prior to the Task Force meeting in May.

b. FCC Response to Task Force Petition and Recommendations on MMSI Policy. The Task Force Petition of 21 May 2007 advocated numerous actions which the FCC should take to better administer the MMSI registration procedure. The FCC has not yet announced their decision on the Task Force petition but it is believed that they are prepared to implement most of the recommendations. Although it is unusual for a Petition not to be acted on for two years, we hope to have their formal response by the May 2009 Task Force meeting.

c. NMEA offer to host a Master Register of MMSI Assignments. Dave Hayden announced that the NMEA was prepared to take on the job of maintaining a Master Registration Database of all U.S. MMSI assignments. The FCC offered no objection since their assignments to vessels with a Station License are all in the public domain. It was intended that the Coast Guard's MISLE database would be the master database of MMSI numbers but MISLE is a secure database and not accessible by outsiders. Further, our efforts to update the FCC registrations in MISLE and give registration agents temporary access to MISLE for management purposes have not yet been successful. Accordingly, if the NMEA offer can be accepted, we need to verify that there are no privacy issues which would deter the registration agents from incorporating their assignments in the NMEA database. See also Para. 9b. below.

d. Use of Marine VHF Portable Radios Ashore. This item was raised because it is a violation of FCC Rules to use a portable VHF radio ashore even though people do it

all the time. There was a consensus that it is very undesirable to ignore the Rules since it gets people in the habit of ignoring all the rules. It was agreed that the Task Force would petition the FCC to revise the rules to permit use of maritime VHF handheld radios within a reasonable distance of waterfront areas. This could be tied to miles from Navigable water but that may be too restrictive if we want to include inland lakes with boating activity. A draft Petition will be presented at the May meeting.

e. Better Definition of “Qualified” Technical Support. The discussion on AIS requirements generated a number of comments that the public needs better guidance on the qualifications of technicians authorized to set up and install AIS equipment. Although the issue was raised with respect to AIS, it comes up relative to other equipment as well. It was agreed that an ad hoc group drawn from our Service Agents and Manufacturers Task Group would address this problem and report back to the Task Force. Several names were taken at the meeting but other interested parties are welcome to participate if they furnish their names to Jack Fuechsel.

4. The NGA Report on Promulgation of Marine Safety Information (MSI): Pete Doherty of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) provided an update on international efforts to update promulgation of MSI to meet projected requirements. Pete’s Agency is the U.S. coordinator of international MSI broadcasting and he also heads the International Hydrographic Organization’s World-Wide Navigational Warning Service. New Navareas No. XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, and XXI have just been established to cover prospectively navigable waters of the Arctic. Canada, Norway, and Russia will manage the new Navareas. Other new initiatives include accepting Tsunami Warnings in MSI broadcasts, and the potential addition of Health Advisories plus a review to see if new Port Security broadcasts are needed. The International SafetyNET Manual is currently being revised and the International Navtex Manual will be updated next.

6. Report from the C-Port Association. The Task Force was pleased to welcome Terry Hill, Chairman, and Fiona Morgan, Executive Director of the C-Port Association representing the Marine Assistance and Salvage industry. Their members include Sea Tow and Towboat U.S. typically operating boats around 25 feet in length which respond to search and rescue cases involving their clients and others. A typical client would be a recreational vessel with a contract which offers free towing in emergence in return for a set annual membership fee. Collectively, C-Port members handle about 100,000 cases a year. Many of their towing vessels and some of their shore stations are equipped with VHF-DSC radios. Terry Hill expressed the concern of many of their members who operate vessels just slightly longer than the 26 foot cutoff which would require that they be outfitted for AIS if they also have more than 600 horsepower available. He questioned if this part of the towing industry was specifically targeted by the new AIS carriage proposals or merely happened to be affected.

7. GMDSS Modernization Initiative. RADM Ed Gilbert distributed the latest version of a paper he had prepared for Comsar 13 assuming the U.S. has been successful in their efforts to establish a new agenda item to keep the GMDSS under continuing review for better technology. Previous successful modernization efforts include paper-

less Navtex receivers and AIS SARTs. Promising new proposals include a GPS enhanced handheld VHF-DSC radio and incorporating AIS into an EPIRB for scene-of-action locating. More fundamental issues are a proposed review of GMDSS functional requirements and achieving a greater throughput for MSI promulgation systems.

8. 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 has been submitted to COMSAR 13.

b. Activity of RTCM SC-121 on Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). A Working Group of this committee is exploring expanded use of the binary messaging system in Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) areas. Several types of messages are under consideration – Met/Hydro and environmental data. A Met/Hydro test bed is now operating in the Tampa Bay sending NOAA PORTS data. Area messages can be used to broadcast warnings affecting a specified area, such as Right Whale alerts and areas in which they have been located. Waterway messages could include bridge data as well as current information.

c. Activity of RTCM SC-123 on Data over VHF Channels. This committee is developing proposed guidelines for transmitting data on VHF channels in a manner which would best protect adjacent voice channels and utilize the unused space between channels.

d. Activity of RTCM SC-128 on Satellite Location Devices. This new Committee was chartered at the request of the Coast Guard to develop performance standards for new systems such as SPOT which are being advertised for emergency or life saving applications with the goal of enhancing reliability. The Committee plans its initial meeting in late February.

e. Other RTCM Announcements of Interest. The 2009 RTCM Assembly including a Task Force meeting will be held at the Tradewinds Hotel in St. Pete Beach, Florida May 3-9, 2009.

9. Reports and Issues: The Recreational Vessel Group Report. The report of the Recreational Group included the following:

a. Use of Marine VHF Handhelds Ashore. Chuck Husick will take the lead in developing a draft Petition to the FCC seeking to authorize the use of marine VHF portables ashore in maritime areas as discussed earlier (see 3.d. above).

b. NMEA Proposal for Master Database of MMSI Registrations. The Recreational Group will take the lead in determining whether there is a privacy concern regarding release of MMSI registration information to a publically accessible database. This should also address whether Coast Guard RCCs would use the NMEA database in which case all of the descriptive information and contact phone numbers should be included.

c. MMSI Policy for Identifying DSC Handhelds and Small Craft Associated with a Mother Vessel. The MMSI Policy ad hoc group provided a draft summary of MMSI issues but shortage of time required that the issue to be tabled until the next meeting. Those issues remain on the table but the same ad hoc group will address the comments which the Task Force will make in response to the Coast Guard on the new NPRM on AIS carriage on a priority basis since the comments are due 15 April 2009.

d. New Issue to Review Cell Phone Use by the Boating Community. The Task Force remains committed to the Coast Guard policy advocating VHF in preference to cell phones for emergency communications. The reasons for preferring VHF are well documented however, it has been noted that a large number of Search and Rescue cases originate from a cell phone call and that there are extensive inland boating areas where no VHF system is available or planned. Accordingly, the Task Force agreed to investigate the extent of collateral offshore coverage by cellular providers and other factors to determine whether there were enough issues to warrant a more thorough review.

10. Reports from the Commercial Vessel Group. Jack Fuechsel noted that the Task Force comment to the Coast Guard on Fishing Vessel Safety had been approved by the Task Force at the October 2008 meeting, was filed on 11 December, and has been posted on the Task Force website. The Coast Guard NPRM was broad based encompassing all aspects of Fishing Vessel Safety. The Task Force comments were limited to emergency radio facilities. Since this NPRM originated in 2003, early action by the Coast Guard is not anticipated

11. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group: Ralph Sponar's Group will be heavily involved in the new issue attempting to develop criteria for identifying "qualified" technicians as discussed in Para. 3.e. above with respect to setting up and installing AIS and other electronic devices.

12. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Training Group: There are currently no training issues outstanding but we are continuing to monitor GMDSS professional training courses and new courses being developed for the recreational boating community and hope to have a report on a new Coast Guard Auxiliary Training Project at the May meeting.

13. The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force: The next Task Force meeting will be held on Thursday morning 7 May 2009 at the Tradewinds Hotel in St. Pete Beach,

Florida during the RTCM Annual Assembly. The follow on meeting will be held on a date to be determined in early August at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

8 January 2009

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. Review the scope of distress alerting by cell phone and its implications (TF) **NEW**
14. Advocate intership calling on HF GMDSS channels (CV)
15. Rationalize Safety Radio and VMS Requirements for Small Fishing Vessels (CV)
16. Recommend training programs for non-mandatory users of GMDSS systems (RV)
17. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
18. Encourage voluntary users of VHF-DSC Register for MMSI and connect GPS (RV)
19. Advocate FCC enable R/Vs keep existing MMSI when applying for Station Lic. (RV)
20. Encourage Mfgs. to upgrade GMDSS explanations in equipment manuals (SA)
21. Monitor guidelines for GMDSS equipment maintenance & maintainer standards (SA)
22. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)
23. Advocate better FCC & USCG management of annual GMDSS inspections (SA)
24. Develop Technician Qualifications for GMDSS Inspections & Installation (SA)
- NEW**
25. 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 7 May 2009 during the RTCM Assembly at the Tradewinds Hotel in St. Pete Beach, Florida.

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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