

NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of 11 August 2005 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 DC on Thursday 11 August 2005. The documents listed below were distributed and copies are available on request. Some are also posted on websites:

Summary record of Task Force meeting of 19 May 2005
Draft Task Force letter to NASBLA re Model Act on EPIRBs and VHF
FCC Letter to Task Force replying to our November 2002 filing on Part 80
Advisory from Panama Canal on Trial use of Long Range Tracking
Paris MOU plans for intensive GMDSS Port State Inspections
Gilbert Paper proposing candidate issues for GMDSS Modernization

2. The Summary Record of the 19 May Task Force meeting was approved. A copy of the Summary Record is posted on the website.

3. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

a. Upgrade of the VHF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A1. There was no report on the Rescue 21 upgrade at the meeting but the following report was received by email subsequent to the meeting: The Initial Review Board (IRB) has been completed and the contractor is gearing up for full rate production. Initial Operating Capability (IOC) should be achieved at the following regions by the end of calendar year 2005:

Atlantic City NJ and Eastern Shore MD

The following regions are under construction should be up and running by the middle of calendar year 2006:

St. Petersburg FL, Mobile AL, Seattle WA and Port Angeles WA

The next 15 regions in the schedule have completed surveys and environmental documentation is completed or in progress. IOC for these regions is expected by the end of calendar year 2007 or early 2008:

Corpus Christi TX, Galveston TX, Long Island Sound NY, Moriches NY, Greater New York City NY, Philadelphia PA, Baltimore MD, Hampton Roads VA, Key West FL,

Mayport FL, Miami FL, New Orleans LA, Astoria OR, North Bend OR, and Portland OR,

The schedule for the rest of the continental U.S. is still under development. Note that the term region was used as the Coast Guard is transitioning from Groups to Sectors but the concept is the same. The Group or Sector headquarters will stand the watch for that region including multiple other VHF stations remoted to the headquarters. The Coast Guard does not plan to declare Sea Area A1 operational until major sections of the coastline have been upgraded but the following IOC, the upgraded regions will be fully operational and watching both channel 16 and the DSC emergency channel 70.

b. Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2. Russ Levin indicated that there have been some positive developments in the project to complete an upgrade to MF-DSC. Necessary work has been identified at each site and funding has been approved but new complications have arisen in that the shift from Groups to Sectors has included some realignment of boundaries and relocations of headquarters, which is necessitating some redesign work.

c. Current Status of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). Jorge Arroyo reported that a recent Request for Information (RFI) invited proposals from industry on how to best extend AIS coverage beyond VTS's and also to inland navigable waterways. This solicitation was sought in order to better draft the Request for Proposals (RFP) for this Nationwide AIS (NAIS) Acquisition Project and meet their RFP publication goal of early 2006, the next *Unified Agenda of Federal Regulatory and Deregulatory Action* (see <http://gpoaccess.gov/ua/browse.html>) after 1 October 2006 will announce the Coast Guard's plan to amend and expand upon current AIS carriage requirements and fully comply with the legislative mandate of the MTSA. Approval of international specifications for Class B AIS equipment (IEC 62287) is in its final stages and we could see these devices as soon as mid 2006.

d. Future developments in Long Range Identification & Tracking (LRIT). LRIT will be a major topic at the upcoming IMO COMSAR Subcommittee meeting in March 2006. The development of a recommended position by the correspondence group is nearly completed. One of the documents distributed was from the Panama Canal Authority, which reported that they were evaluating the use of LRIT to monitor vessels approaching the canal and desiring passage. The use of LRIT in the near term would be voluntary but they hoped to use it routinely in the future. Subsequent to the meeting, we became aware that an IALA sponsored Workshop on LRIT has been announced for 9-11 November 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Details are available on the website: www.iala-aism.org.

f. IMO/COMSAR 10 Meeting in London 6-10 March 2006. Russ Levin announced the upcoming meeting of the SOLAS Working Group for COMSAR 10 in the same room the afternoon of the Task Force meeting. He explained the function of the SOLAS Working Group mechanism and invited interested parties to participate. At the

conclusion of both meetings, there was general agreement that a new meeting place was needed. The security arrangements for using a federal government office building were becoming more cumbersome. The RTCM offered their conference room, which is conveniently located but because of space limitations, would need to set up 'school room style' without a table in front of each participant. Other options will be explored between now and January 2006, the next Task Force meeting in Washington.

g. Publicity for the Coast Guard's new Voice HF Frequency Watch. Joe Hersey reported that he had received a number of complaints from offshore boating interests which were unaware of the Coast Guard's recent shift of HF Voice radio guards to the voice channels specified for GMDSS in addition to the HF-DSC alerting channels presently guarded. The new simplex voice frequencies for Distress and Safety alerting and initial contact are 4125 kHz, 6215 kHz, 8291 kHz, and 12290 kHz. The Task Force offered to assist in getting the word out to potential users who don't read the Federal Register. This can probably be accomplished through magazines such as OFFSHORE and the PROFESSIONAL NAVIGATOR.

4. The FCC Reports: FCC representatives made introductory statements and responded to questions as follows:

a. Status of Part 80 Rule Making Proceedings. Ghassan Khalek provided a summary of recently completed and still pending regulatory proceedings. The letter to the Task Force was a routine acknowledgement of earlier recommendations and explained that most of the recommendations were now moot, having been already adopted or incorporated in other Rule Making dockets which were still open.

b. 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. He explained the very complicated system and the cost to reprogram the system. The proponents of the change pointed out that the current system was wasteful of MMSI numbers and caused additional expense to the boat owner to have the MMSI number changed in the equipment. Since the FCC apparently lacks the funding to implement this change, the Task Force decided to petition the FCC to make the appropriate changes.

c. Carryover Issue: UK Proposal to Issue Ship Station Licenses for Life of the Vessel. There is a UK proposal to issue these licenses for the life of the ship, presumably as long as there was no change of ownership of the vessel. The FCC had reviewed this proposal and would like to adopt it in the U.S. but the Communications Act of 1936 limits such licenses to a 10 year period and the law would have to be changed. The Act is full of obsolete provisions, which have never been removed. It will apparently be

necessary for some other Agency or organization to ask Congress to update the Communications Act.

5. The GMDSS Modernization Initiative. RADM Ed Gilbert provided a status report on the Task Force's new initiative concerning GMDSS modernization. An ad hoc group has been working by email to prioritize the list and refine recommendations. To provide advance information, the latest version of the modernization document was placed on the website well before the meeting. The complete list was reviewed and the following clarifications were offered:

a. VHF Item I.3. The proposal to terminate use of non-DSC VHF at a suitable interval after Sea Area A1 is declared, was held in abeyance pending further developments. It had been noted that many recreational operators use portable equipment, which is not required to have DSC capability unless the FCC adopts a new policy. It was also a concern that withdrawing non-DSC VHF might drive even more boats from VHF to cell phone.

b. Maritime Safety Information Item III.3. This item needs rewording because the Weather Service does not use the alarm feature for maritime warnings in order to avoid automatically alerting land receivers to an exclusively maritime problem.

c. Satellite Services Item IV.2. Although the ad hoc group recommended 2 levels in lieu of 4, there were comments that 3 might be needed in some cases. There is a need for two levels of priority within the GMDSS – distress alerts, follow up messages, and all other GMDSS related communications. This statement will be reworded.

d. Should Other IMO Mandated Electronic Systems be part of the GMDSS? Item VIII. There was a strong consensus that no other systems that may use satellite communications such as SSAS and LRIT be made part of the GMDSS at this time. Issues with Resolution A.888 (21) and oversight need satisfactory resolution first.

e. Recommendations of the American Radio Association (ARA). This item goes beyond the Task Force Draft Modernization Plan but is reported here for information. On 13 July a delegation from the ARA visited Captain Sawyer, Chief of Search and Rescue, to complain that the U.S. was not living up to its treaty commitments with respect to enforcement of GMDSS provisions in Flag and Port State Inspections. The specific concern was that a SOLAS Rule calling for a dedicated radio operator with no other duties during a distress incident was being ignored. It was noted that the Task Force had called on the Coast Guard's Office of Marine Inspection to conduct GMDSS inspections in a more complete manner but training all inspectors to conduct complex GMDSS inspections was moving slowly. The FCC is responsible for the Flag State inspection of U.S. vessels but no longer conducts such inspections with FCC personnel.

7. **The RTCM Report:** RTCM President, Bob Markle announced that the next RTCM Assembly would be held at the Hyatt Hotel in Newport Beach, California May 7-12, 2006. He also noted the following:

a. Joint Petition with Task Force: The RTCM would be interested in joining the Task Force in submitting a petition to resolve the duration of ship licenses and possibly also the petition to modify the Universal Licensing System to accept existing MMSI numbers issued by BOATUS or Seatow when vessels apply for a Station License.

b. VHF Data Standards: The RTCM Board had recognized the need for VHF data standards and would establish a Special Committee to draft such a standard, perhaps modeled after the specification work on Class B AIS technology.

c. Above Deck Antenna Guidelines: The RTCM Board had recognized the need for guidelines for above deck antennas and they plan to investigate a possible joint effort with the NMEA or the CIRM.

8. **The Report of the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group:** Alan Rinker of Connexion By Boeing (CBB) provided an in depth briefing on his company's new maritime service. Some highlights of his presentation included he following:

a. Basic Service: A KU band service patterned after their aeronautical service, which has recently been made available to shipping. They lease transponders on existing satellites to cover the routes where coverage is needed (mostly northern hemisphere currently). Typically used by shipping companies with a large fleet and wanting the ships to participate fully in the Company network.

b. Shipboard Equipment: The shipboard terminal is a one meter stabilized tracking antenna. The service can be terminated in a switched distribution network or wireless system on board with minimal need for a specialized operator.

c. Technical Specifications: Spread spectrum signal with up to 30 Mbps in the forward direction and a return channel from the ship of up to 2 Mpbs. System can handle live video and internet access.

9. **The Report of the GMDSS Training Group:** There were no new issues raised by members of this Group.

10. **The Recreational Vessel Group Report:**

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 and is expected to be available for Beta testing by members soon.

b. NASBLA Draft Model Act on VHF and/or EPIRBs for all Vessels Going More than 1 Mile Offshore: Following up on a recommendation from the Boating Safety Advisory Committee, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) has drafted a Model Act which they will recommend to all coastal states. The draft Act is patterned after a Hawaiian Law, which requires that all vessels going more than 1 mile offshore carry VHF Radio or an EPIRB. In reviewing the draft letter to NASBLA, the Task Force concurred but will recommend that the NASBLA Model Act accept a Category 1 Marine Personal Locator Beacon as the equivalent of an EPIRB.

c. BOATUS MMSI Report: The FCC has agreed that police and fireboats, which are not otherwise required to have Station Licenses, may obtain MMSI numbers from BOATUS or Sea Tow. It was noted that the FCC waives fees for Law Enforcement agencies.

d. Boating General Notes: Elaine Dickinson reported that boating accident fatalities had been trending down and are now at an all time historic low of 676, down from 703 in 2003. In 2003 there were 5.5 fatalities per 100,000 registered boats. The assumed population of registered recreational boats is about 12.8 million. Legislation has been approved making \$ 110 million in marine fuel tax revenues per year available for boating safety programs.

11. The Report of the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group: There were no new issues raised by members of this Group.

12. The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force: The Task Force agreed to meet next in Naples, Florida on Friday morning 14 October 2005 during the NMEA Annual Meeting. The follow on meeting will be in Washington in early January, tentatively Thursday 5 January 2006.

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

11 August 2005

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. Review GMDSS publications and recommend updates to keep the data current (TR)
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@verizon.net (note change in phone and email which take effect mid September. If you have an Internet server with spam filters, please authorize receipt of messages from gmdss@verizon.net.

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