

## NATIONAL GMDSS TASK FORCE

### Newsletter and Summary Record of 30 November 2017 Meeting

- 1. The Task Force Meeting.** This Newsletter reports on the recent Special meeting of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) Task Force in New Orleans, Louisiana during the Annual WorkBoat Show. The Task Force is sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard and dedicated to monitoring the success and shortcomings of the GMDSS. The Task Force is also active in current efforts to modernize the GMDSS and monitors related developments in maritime radio and electronic navigation (e-navigation). The Task Force advocates voluntary use of radio safety equipment by all vessels and makes recommendations to government authorities to improve safety at sea regulations for vessels subject to those regulations.
- 2. Task Force membership.** Membership is open to individuals associated with commercial vessel operations, recreational vessel interests, training institutions, service agents, manufacturers, government authorities and any interested person or organization, and there is no fee for participation. New members are welcome, to join, send your name, organization (if any), email address, and telephone number (optional) to [gmdsstf@gmail.com](mailto:gmdsstf@gmail.com). Members who are unable to attend Task Force meetings are invited to participate by email and to connect with Task Force meetings by conference call. This Newsletter goes out to over 4000 members after each quarterly meeting. The Task Force also maintains a website at: <https://www.navcen.uscg.mil/?pageName=MaritimeTelecomms> (click GMDSS/TF)
- 3. The summary record.** This record of the meeting is provided for information and will be posted on the Task Force portion of the Coast Guard web site. The GMDSS Task Force met on 30 November 2017 at the New Orleans Convention Center with 30 persons in attendance. This was a special meeting to assess local issues and was supported by local Coast Guard, FCC and NWS government representatives in addition to State NASBLA personnel and WorkBoat Show attendees. Important insights included the expected problems with use and registration of emergency equipment in the R/V community and ways to improve GMDSS Inspections.
- 4. Distribution of Information Papers:** The following Papers of interest were distributed and are available to non-attendees on request:

  - Allocation of MMSI Ship Station Blocks in the U.S.
  - U.S. Coast Guard Official Mobile App for Smart Phones
  - 2016 Recreational Boating Casualty Statistics
  - Detection Ranges, AIS SART vs Radar SART vs EPIRBs, Key West 2016
  - Inmarsat Introduces SafetyNET II
  - GMDSS Task Force Continuing Work List
- 5. The FCC Reports:** Ghassan Khalek reported with the following highlights:

  - a. ICOM AMERICA Inc. Request for Waiver to Permit Manufacture, Importation, Sale, and installation of Class E Digital Selective Calling Radio.** Ghassan explained that ITU R M. 493-13, Annex 4 establishes new requirements that are not met by the ICOM M802 radio

commonly used by vessels needing an HF/DSC radio. Icom applied for a waiver to continue selling this popular radio to non-SOLAS vessels. Approval was announced on 3 October 2017.

**b. FCC and Coast Guard Met with Alaska F/V Operators and Local Inspectors in Seattle recently to Review FCC Waiver Policy re GMDSS.** Ghassan Khalek and Russ Levin of the Coast Guard met in Seattle recently and reviewed waiver policy with affected parties. Some waivers granted in the past will not be renewed due to changing circumstances, and new requests will be evaluated in light of vessels total outfit of radio equipment.

**6. Safety At Sea Presentation From U.S. Sailing:** Bruce Brown presented a Video Recording featuring Chuck Hawley of U.S.Sailing that reviewed the fundamentals of /Safety at Sea. While oriented toward operators of sailing vessels the principles are applicable to all craft, and the presentation was welcomed by the group.

**7. The Coast Guard Reports:** Jack Fuechsel reported with the following highlights:

**a. MMSI Management and Assignment Policy Issues.** It was noted that the pending changes to the FCC's Part 80 include several improvements in MMSI management. Because the failure to properly register for an MMSI number is greatest among recreational vessels, the Task Force is working with the Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety to modify the latter's check list for voluntary inspections. One of the handouts at the meeting was a Coast Guard MMSI Block Allotment showing which government agency or registration agent issued certain blocks of MMSI numbers.

**b. The Task Force Petition to Require Emergency Beacons on Recreational Vessels Offshore.** The most significant outstanding recommendation from the Task Force to the Coast Guard is that they use their regulatory authority to require all vessels going more than 3 miles offshore to carry EPIRBs or equivalent distress alerting beacons. This recommendation was made several years ago but has not yet been acted on by the Coast Guard. Meanwhile, the Task Force continues to advocate voluntary carriage of some version of satellite emergency beacon by all vessels going more than 20 miles offshore and voluntary carriage of VHF radios, preferably with DSC and connected GPS for use within 20 miles of the coast.

**c. NTSB Recommendations to NOAA/NWS & USCG re Weather Warnings:** The NTSB has been reviewing the loss of the EL FARO during a hurricane and has concluded that the ship was probably not getting sufficient weather warnings. Her track toward Puerto Rico probably took her outside of NAVTEX range but she should have been getting SafetyNET warnings. The NTSB recommendations were to the Weather Service to improve forecasts and warnings and to the Coast Guard to improve dissemination to the extent possible. The New Orleans Port Meteorologist noted in this regard that one of the best ways to improve tropical forecasts would be to increase reports from voluntary observing vessels.

**d. Comparison of Radar SARTs and AIS SARTs.** The substantially greater ranges at which search aircraft could detect the AIS SART as compared with the Radar SART was summarized as follows:

Aircraft Altitude	20,000 ft	10,000 ft	5000 ft	1000 ft
Detection Range to 5 AIS SARTs	119-132	84-97	59-79	28-65
Detection range to Radar SART	23	22	30	33
Detection range to EPIRB	126	115	68	52
Detection range to 121.5 homer	8	7	5	4

Given this significant range difference and reports that the Radar SARTs do not work well with ship's solid-state radars, Task Force members questioned whether it was time to propose phasing out the Radar SART. It was reported that the Coast Guard would consider an input paper to the next IMO Navigation, Communications, Search and Rescue (NCSR) meeting with that recommendation.

**8. Reports and Issues of the Service Agents and Manufacturers Group:** Hugh Lupo reported on behalf of Service Agents qualified to make GMDSS Inspections of ships subject to the Safety Of Life At Sea (SOLAS) Treaty with the following highlights:

**a. Automatic Identification System (AIS) is not a GMDSS requirement.** AIS is required for all ships over 300 tons and also for many smaller commercial vessels subject to national regulations. Inspection of the AIS is an annual requirement for SOLAS ships but because AIS is not part of the GMDSS, it is not part of the GMDSS annual inspection. Inspectors usually include AIS in their annual GMDSS inspections however, because it is also an annual requirement.

**b. New Test Equipment Available for GMDSS Inspections.** Hugh Lupo introduced Alexander Semyoslin and Olga Babich of Musson Marine from the Ukraine who described their test equipment which is available at deeply discounted prices and which can make all tests required for GMDSS inspections. Hugh noted that some inspectors who lacked the very expensive test equipment traditionally used might have been tempted to skip some of the measurements, which should have been made.

**c. Live Testing of EPIRBs was Discussed.** There was extended discussion among service agents qualified to perform GMDSS Inspections as to whether it was still permissible to test EPIRBs live by activating them 5 minutes before the hour?

**d. Should Vessel Operators Change Equipment Now that Coast Guard does NOT Guard 2182 kHz Ashore?** Operators should be aware that SOLAS ships are required to guard the MF Distress channel 2182 and can relay calls for assistance. Non-SOLAS vessels can also request a waiver of MF carriage requirements if a qualified satellite system is available. Vessels can also use HF channels to request assistance since all HF Distress channels are guarded ashore by Coast Guard Communications Stations.

**9. Coast Guard Command Center Reports on Problems Encountered in search and Rescue Cases:** Kevin Robb of the Eighth Coast Guard District Command Center and Scott Talbot of the Cost Guard Sector New Orleans Command Center reported with the following highlights:

**a. False Alerts are experienced in all GMDSS systems including EPIRBs, Inmarsat, MF/HF Radio and VHF Radio.** These are not only time consuming to resolve but often delay prosecution of other cases.

**b. Most VHF Alerts lack a Valid MMSI Number.** For the last several years only VHF Radios with DSC could be sold in the U.S. There are still some legacy non-DSC Radios in service but it is apparent that many operators are failing to register for MMSI numbers or inserting bogus numbers despite risk to themselves in an emergency.

**c. Very Few VHF Alerts are received with the GPS Position indicating that many radios are not hooked up to a GPS Receiver.**

**d. Smart Phone Alerts forwarded by 911 Operators almost never include the position indicating that the 911 centers have not been upgraded to the latest standard.**

**e. New Radios with Embedded GPS have been very helpful in assuring that the position is relayed along with the Distress Alert.** This also overcomes the somewhat complicated task of manually connecting a GPS receiver to the radio.

**10. Why the GMDSS Task Force is Emphasizing Recreational Vessels:** Jack Fuechsel explained that the Task Force was commissioned before the new GMDSS took effect to help prepare private sector shipping for the new carriage and training requirements. Because the GMDSS took effect in 1999, the few U.S.SOLAS ships have been equipped for years while the millions of recreational vessels are permitted to use all GMDSS systems with little or no training in the use of radios. A basic mission of the Task Force is to help minimize false alerts, most of which come from the recreational boating community. Accordingly, the Task Force has placed emphasis on supporting the voluntary training programs of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons, U.S. Sailing and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA). In this regard we were especially pleased to have several members of the Louisiana NASBLA (Fish and Wildlife Organization), with us for the meeting.

**11. GMDSS Modernization.** Jack Fuechsel noted briefly that modernization was still an active project at the International Maritime Organization but their procedures require a lot of time. It is still expected that Iridium will be accepted as an approved GMDSS satellite services provider. There will also be some revisions in Sea Area definitions to account for the fact that Iridium has global coverage whereas the Inmarsat geostationary satellite constellation (old Sea Area A3) does not cover the polar areas.

**13. Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force:** The next regular Task Force meeting will be held at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia on 11 January 2018.

## GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

27 September 2017

1. Monitor IMO 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 NAVCOMSAR meetings (TF)
7. Advocate Canadian coordination to extend GMDSS services to the Great Lakes (TF)
8. Advocate voluntary carriage of VHF and EPIRB/PLBs by all vessels offshore (TF)
9. Advocate overhaul of FCC policy and practice on MMSI assignments (TF)
10. Monitor non-GMDSS systems: AIS, LRIT, SSAS, VDR, VMS, & E-Navigation (TF)
11. Recommend updates for Coast Guard NVIC on GMDSS Requirements (TF)
12. Recommend means to facilitate Distress Alerts by Cell Phone & Internet (TF)
13. Advocate GNSS for U.S. EPIRB and PLB Standards (TF)
14. Advocate mandatory Distress Beacons on R/V more than 3 miles offshore (TF)
15. Advocate use of the Alaska AIS Monitor Network for VHF Distress Guard (TF)
16. Monitor Developments in Cybersecurity and advise membership (TF)
17. Review GMDSS concepts and make modernization recommendations (MOD)
18. Advocate intership calling on HF GMDSS channels (CV)
19. Recommend Safety Radio and VMS Requirements for Small Fishing Vessels (CV)
20. Recommend Safety Radio & Navigation Requirements for Towing Vessels (CV)
21. Recommend Safety Radio & Nav. Outfit for Small Passenger Vessels (CV)
22. Advocate applications for new MF/HF Digital Communications Service (CV)
23. Advocate voluntary training programs for users of GMDSS systems (RV)
24. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
25. Encourage users of VHF-DSC to Register for MMSI and connect GPS (RV)
26. Advocate FCC let R/Vs retain existing MMSI when applying for Station Lic. (RV)
27. Encourage Mfgs. to upgrade GMDSS explanations in equipment manuals (SA)
28. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)
29. Advocate better FCC & USCG management of annual GMDSS inspections (SA)
30. Maintain Inspection Guidelines and Check Lists for selected vessel types (SA)
31. Recommend Certification Path For GMDSS Maintainer (SA) and (TR)
32. Maintain GMDSS Question Pools for FCC and Coast Guard Examinations (TR)
33. Advocate 5 Year USCG Recertification Training of GMDSS Operators (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  
   (MOD) Modernization Task Group

**Please refer questions and proposals to Captain Jack Fuechsel at 703-963-3747 or [gmdsstf@gmail.com](mailto:gmdsstf@gmail.com). If you have an Internet server with spam filters, please authorize receipt of messages from [gmdsstf@gmail.com](mailto:gmdsstf@gmail.com) (File: TFSR-91.5.doc)**