

GMDSS TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of 8 May 2024 Meeting

1. **The Task Force Meeting.** This Newsletter reports on the recent meeting of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) Task Force sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard and the Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services (RTCM) and held in person in conjunction with the RTCM Annual Assembly in Atlantic Beach, FL. The Task Force is 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.

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 the Director, Bill Cairns, at bcairns@rtcm.org. Members who are unable to attend Task Force meetings are invited to participate by email correspondence and to connect with Task Force meetings by conference call or virtual meeting platform. This Newsletter goes out to over 6000 members after each meeting. The Task Force also maintains a website at <https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/task-force-background>.

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 NAVCEN web site and the RTCM web site. The GMDSS Task Force held an in-person meeting on 8 May 2024. The meeting was attended by 58 members in person or through Microsoft Teams or by phone.

4. **Distribution of Information Papers:** The following Papers of interest were displayed and are available to all on the website:

<https://www.joecel.com/GMDSSTaskForce>

Model Course 1.25

Radar SART Tests

MSC.1-Circ.1676 - Delays Affecting The Availability Of New GMDSS

Equipment

New GMDSS SOLAS Carriage Requirements.pdf

SOLAS 1974 (182) - RESOLUTION MSC.496(105)

5. **Coast Guard Reports:** USCG reported the following highlights:

a. Planning for the IMO NCSR-11 meeting: Patrick Gallagher highlighted issues for the upcoming 11th session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Sub-Committee for Navigation, Communications, and Search & Rescue (NCSR 11) to be held

4-13 June 2024. The following NCSR 11 agenda items (listed by those agenda items) are relevant for the GMDSS TF:

5. Developments in GMDSS services, including guidelines on maritime safety information (MSI)
6. Response to matters related to the ITU-R Study Groups and ITU World Radiocommunication Conference, including Interference of AIS by VHF Voice Transmissions and RADAR SART
7. Development of global maritime SAR services, including harmonization of maritime and aeronautical procedures and amendments to the IAMSAR Manual
This agenda item includes IAMSAR Manual amendment, SAR Capability Assistance, IAMSAR Manual Volume II 2028 addition – guidance to ICAO/IMO JWG, Iridium GMDSS SAR implementation, and AMVER annual report
8. Development of performance standards for a digital navigational data system (NAVDAT)
9. Development of amendments to SOLAS chapters IV and V and performance standards and guidelines to introduce VHF Data Exchange System (VDES)
10. Review of the appropriateness and effectiveness of SOLAS regulation IV/5 (Provision of radiocommunication services)
11. Revision of the Criteria for the provision of mobile satellite communication services in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) (resolution A.1001(25)). US to develop a Comment paper once the report comes out to capture US and Iridium issues with the recommended changes.

b. ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group: Pat Gallagher noted the ICAO/IMO JWG 30th session met November 2023 in Cape Town South Africa and nothing had occurred subsequent to that meeting. Follow-on work by the JWG pends action by NCSR11.

c. MSI Dissemination – NAVDAT vs Satellite: Jerry Ulcek reported that USCG is still using NAVTEX and NAVDAT is still a work in progress. It was previously reported that USCG is updating its NAVDAT infrastructure, which had spectrum allocated for it at WRC-19.. NAVTEX is incapable of transmitting S-100 updates due to file size being too large for NBDP. No decision has been made on dissemination of MSI over NAVDAT vs satellite.

d. ITU-R WP5B Update: Jerry Ulcek gave a verbal brief on WP5B. He noted Johnny Schultz' presentation to the Annual Assembly regarding preparation for WRC-27, which is available in the Task Force documents. He also noted automatic channel selection capabilities for MF/HF in the future.

e. Transition of SARSAT Program from NOAA to Coast Guard: Ed Thiedeman noted that the USCG had established a Division, CG-SAR-3, for the transition and that Layne Carter is serving as Division Chief and Program Manager. Integrated Product Teams are developing procedures on Administration, Operations, Technical Support, Systems Security, Financial, and Program Management. The end of FY2025 is the target date for the transition. NOAA and NASA will serve as technical advisors to the new SARSAT program and a Memorandum of Understanding is being updated. NOAA will continue to operate the ground segment. USCG is currently updating operational and

technical procedures.

f. Recommendation to IMO MSC that all mariners carry PLBs: Ed Thiedeman noted that USCG is preparing a submission to MSC 109 proposing voluntary guidance that mariners carry MSLDs for their particular areas of operation. Co-sponsors are being sought for this submission. During discussions, there was general agreement from the TF that the USCG should be encouraged to include AIS receive capability on all USCG aircraft.

g. MSLDs: Ed Thiedeman, chair of SC-119 on MSLDs, noted that the draft MSLD standard SC11901.1 had been updated and was near CDV.

h. LED Lighting: Joe Hersey, the Chair of SC-137, noted that the SC-137 standard on LED lighting interference to VHF and AIS serves as a normative reference in the ABYC navigation light standard C5 and labs are testing nav lights to the RTCM standard. Review by IEC (60533 whole ship std) is now being considered in TC18 using the RTCM standard and interference to navigational lights will be included.

i. Four Digit Numbering of VHF Channels: Joe Hersey noted 4-digit numbering of VHF will be in the GMDSS DSC standard for new installs being worked on now. The new date for implementation of four-digit numbering of VHF channels was by the first radio survey after 1 January 2028. This will require a revised GMDSS Circular for SOLAS ships, amending the IEC standard for class D radios. The new RTCM Standard being developed by SC-101 will require 4 Digit numbering.

j. VHF-FM voice blocking AIS on own ship and close by: Joe Hersey reported that AIS will be blocked by VHF when the mic is keyed, even when antennas are separated by as much as 136m. USCG submitted a paper to NCSR 11 to notify mariners of this situation. RTCM Board has agreed that SC-121 will develop a voluntary RTCM standard or Publicly Available Specification (PAS) to address testing of AIS.

k. Status of Class D DSC Radios: Joe Hersey, Chair of SC-101, reported that the SC is developing recommended changes to the IEC Class D DSC Standard IEC 62238. This work should be finalized by the end of 2024.

l. Radar SART Performance: Joe Hersey reported that solid state radars do not reliably detect Radar SARTs or RACONS until control settings are changed. Radar operators need to adjust controls which degrades radar performance to make a radar SART visible on the display. AIS SARTs have a much higher detection range than a radar SART. NMC training standard addresses how to detune a radar to better receive the radar SART. The Task Force felt that an updated Safety Alert should be issued to encourage the replacement of Radar SARTS with AIS SARTs when the Radar SART is due for its 5-year battery replacement.

m. Satellite System – Pressing matters

It was noted that Iridium , Inmarsat, Orbcomm, and Galileo had given presentations at the RTCM Annual Assembly and those presentations would be made available on the Task Force documents site. Mark Lawson (Iridium) and Peter Broadhurst (Inmarsat) made brief added statements regarding the revision to IMO assembly resolution A.1001, *Criteria for the provision of mobile satellite communication systems in the GMDSS*.

6. SOLAS GMDSS amendments with entry into force of 1 January 2024: Joe

Hersey noted the new GMDSS carriage requirements and related performance standards for NAVTEX, Radar SART, ICS, aero VHF handheld, etc. The TF agreed that a summary of changes to the old standards to the new standards is needed. Joe Hersey and Ed Thiedeman agreed to lead an offline WG to articulate these changes. Kurt Anderson, Ghassan Khalek, Pat Gallagher, Eric Weber, and Malachi Clark had previously agreed to participate in this work. Katie Knox noted the Request For Information in the Federal Register regarding the FCC Inspection Certificates and welcomed public comment. Joe Hersey noted that the entry into force for VHF handheld radios had been delayed until 1 January 2028.

7. **MMSI WG and related issues:** Joe Hersey noted that the MMSI WG met on 17 January and the following issues are relevant.

a. **MMSI Management:** Joe Hersey suggested there is a need to get the Power Squadron and ShineMicro MMSI databases into the USCG MISLE database. NTIA is taking over registration of USG vessels and their database will also need to be added to MISLE. A further update has been added to the USCG [MMSI FAQ webpage](#). ShineMicro has opened access to their database to USCG SAR watchstanders. MMSI Working Group documents, including summary records of meetings, are available [here](#).

b. **Supplemental TF Check Lists for MMSI, GPS & PLB during Voluntary Inspections:** CGAUX is in the process of adding an MMSI check to its courtesy inspection checklist.

c. **Revised MOU with Agents that Assign MMSIs:** This is being deferred by USCG and FCC to the future.

d. **Update on NMEA Activities & plans to issue MMSIs:** Nothing new to report.

8. **Recreational Vessel Group:** Gene Danko's report included the following highlights:

a. **Report of the National Boating Safety Advisory Committee:** Brian Moore from USCG Boating Safety provided a detailed presentation on NBSAC efforts. Citing fatality statistics, he noted NBSAC recommendations for recreational boaters to carry an EPIRB when going beyond 3 nm offshore. His ppt is available in the Task Force document repository.

b. **Aqua Alert Bill in Congress for Relaying MSI Alerts to Cell Phones That Register for the Voluntary Service:** Gene Danko noted that the Alert Bill had been referred to CG&MT committee. Ed Thiedeman added the TF that the National Defense Authorization Acts directed the USCG to investigate this method of service, but no further Congressional updates have been provided. CG has developed policies and procedures and defined performance capabilities for an Aqua Alert. Selected CG Sectors will be identified for a pilot program with the initial one in Sector Long Island Sound. USCG is seeking Congressional guidance on whether this system should be opt in or opt out. The current pilot program is set up with geo-fencing and requires boaters to opt out.

c. **Revised GMDSS Information Bulletins for R/V and R/V with VHF.** These items are being finalized by Gene Danko and are available on NAVCEN website. Point of contact needs to be updated to reflect new GMDSS Director or anonymized.

9. **Commercial Vessel Task Group:** Johnny Lindstrom.
a. Shipboard Weather and Environmental Observations by AIS: Ed Thiedeman noted that the USCG is working with NOAA for the voluntary ship observing program and AMVER participating vessels to include in the USCG database for these observations. It had been previously noted that the prototype system of shipboard weather observations had moved to a more operational system hosted by NOAA NDBC.

10. **Reports and Issues of the Service Agents and Manufacturers Group:**

a. How to conduct a GMDSS Inspection: Joe Hersey noted that the Task Force is required to maintain the FCC checklists for GMDSS Inspections, Small Passenger Vessels, Great Lakes vessels, and Bridge to bridge. Joe Hersey recommended a small WG to update these checklists.

11. **Training Task Group.** Kurt Anderson reported with the following highlights:

a. Training Group will review FCC Elements 3, 8 and 9 Relating to GMDSS Maintainers: No progress to report

b. Iridium and STCW Lab Proficiencies: Kyle Hurst of Iridium has been working with the Training Group to develop Lab Proficiencies as Iridium enters full GMDSS Service. Question Pools for Operator Licenses will be adjusted to apply to the Iridium environment and submitted to NMC for approval. The draft proficiencies are being proofed and should be ready in the early Spring. This item will be retained on the Agenda pending further developments.

c. Task Force Information Bulletins on Iridium Services New Bulletins are still in drafting by the Training Task Group.

d. F/V Exemptions, Waivers & Tonnage Issues: The many exemptions and waivers issued and the tonnage rules in general complicate the training of new operators. This is a longstanding issue and remains in limbo.

e. GMDSS Operator Requirements, Checks During Inspections: This item remains in limbo.

12. **FCC Reports:**

a. Waiver of Rules to allow use of IEC Standard for MOB in the U.S: Ghassan Khalek noted that a waiver of FCC Rules was being granted by the FCC on a case-by-case basis for MOBs, PLBs, AIS ATON, and EPIRBs to allow the use of the new International Standard IEC 63269 for MOBs in the U.S. The procedure is for manufacturers to request the waiver first from the USCG then to FCC. RTCM SC-119 has been reactivated to update the standard to IEC63269.

b. Plans to Improve Routing of Emergency Calls: The FCC has embarked on a program to improve the prompt handling of emergency calls through the “e911” call system for prompt routing of calls from vessels to Coast Guard RCCs.

c. Foreign Flag large recreational vessels registered via USPS assigned block
Some Foreign Flag Vessels have registered for MMSIs from the USPS Number Block: This violation was apparently done by foreign applicants seeking to obtain MMSI identity at no cost. FCC Enforcement Bureau has been advised. This item will be DELETED

from the agenda.

13. Reports from other Governmental and International Agencies:

a. Update from NOAA's National Weather Service: No report was available from NOAA/NWS. Pat Gallagher noted the upcoming UNCLOG meeting scheduled for 6 June 2024. Joe Hersey noted that all of the NOAA weather products that are broadcast on VHF, NAVTEX, etc. had recently been listed on the NAVCEN website.

b. NOAA SARSAT Update: Ed Thiedeman noted that NOAA was upgrading its Ground Stations and undergoing final acceptance. NOAA is working to upgrade the ground station in Guam and later Hawaii including its phased array antennas. USCG is working with COSPAS-SARSAT on two-way communications (TWC).

c. Army Corps of Engineers: No report available, noting the previous report at the Assembly given by Brian Tetreault on the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

d. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA): It was noted that Don Meyer had provided a detailed brief on NGA activities to the RTCM Assembly the previous day. He noted the NGA Radio Nav aids app is available outside of the NGA firewall. The S-124 S-MAP became available May 2022.

e. NTSB: No report available.

e. Canadian Maritime Issues: FCC noted the termination of the Great Lakes Agreement regulations, and that Canada prepared a submission to IMO MSC 108 on the subject. An agreement had been reached regarding equivalent application of the rules by the US and Canada in the Great Lakes.

f. CIRM: No report available, noting that CIRM had provided a detailed report at the RTCM Assembly the previous day.

14. Review Summary Record of 18 January 2024 and Continuing Work List. The summary record of the previous Task Force meeting is posted on the Task Force website. The Continuing Work Program is appended to each agenda and updated as needed.

15. Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force: The Task Force tentatively planned a virtual meeting for Thursday, 5 September 2024 at 1000. The draft agenda for the next meeting will be posted in the What's New section of www.rtc.org once it is available.

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

8 May 2024

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 programs that broadcast MSI for GMDSS Standards conformance (TF)
5. Review GMDSS Internet Web Sites and update Task Force portion of NAVCEN site (TF)
6. Support SOLAS Working Group planning for IMO NCSR and Joint Experts meetings (TF)
7. Advocate voluntary carriage of VHF and EPIRB/PLBs by all vessels offshore (TF)
8. Monitor FCC policy and practice on MMSI assignments (TF)
9. Monitor non-GMDSS systems: AIS, LRIT, SSAS, VDES, VMS, & E-Navigation (TF)
10. Recommend means to improve Distress Alerts by Cell Phone & Internet (TF)
11. Advocate mandatory Distress Beacons on R/V more than 3 miles offshore (TF)
12. Advocate use of the Alaska AIS Monitor Network for VHF Distress Guard (TF)
13. Monitor Developments in Cybersecurity and educate membership (TF)
14. Advocate Earliest Fitting of AIS on Coast Guard Helicopters (TF)
15. Review GMDSS concepts and make modernization recommendations (MOD)
16. Monitor automatic response to test calls to USCG HF Commstas (CV)
17. Recommend Safety Radio and VMS Requirements for Small Fishing Vessels (CV)
18. Recommend Safety Radio & Navigation Requirements for Towing Vessels (CV)
19. Recommend Safety Radio & Navigation Outfit for Small Passenger Vessels (CV)
20. Advocate better FCC & USCG management of annual GMDSS inspections (CV)
21. Maintain Inspection Guidelines and Check Lists for selected vessel types (CV)
22. Advocate voluntary training programs for users of GMDSS systems (RV)
23. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
24. Encourage users of VHF-DSC to Register for MMSI and connect GPS (RV)
25. Encourage Mfgs. to upgrade readability of GMDSS items in equipment manuals (SA)
26. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)
27. Coordinate with USCG-NMC and FCC on training uniformity (TR)
28. 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
 (MOD) GMDSS Modernization Task Group

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