

GMDSS TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of 14 September 2023 Meeting

1. **The Task Force Meeting.** This Newsletter reports on the recent virtual 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). 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.

Change in Leadership. The meeting was led by Mr. Bill Cairns, the new Director of the Task Force following the retirement in May of Captain Jack Fuechsel in June after his nearly 30 years in that role. Bill comes to the task force with extensive experience in maritime technology by way of the American Pilots Association and U.S. Coast Guard and extensive experience with RTCM, IMO and IALA.

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 a virtual meeting on 14 September 2023. The virtual meeting was attended by 42 members 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>
USCG ALCOAST 440 of 2022 iPhone 14 able to text via satellites
COMSAR.1-Circ.32-Rev.2 - Harmonization Of GMDSS Requirements For Radio Installations
NTSB SEACOR POWER SART Factual Report
Draft ITU-R M.1171 Radiotelephony Procedures
DUKW Amphibious Passenger Vessels rule 2023-19421
FCC News 911 routing of emergency calls DOC-390360A1
HR 7776 NDAA 2023 – Upgrade R21 in AK and let F/V mark nets with AIS
IMO-ITU EG 19-6-2 - Report of the investigation into the SEACOR POWER
Iridium SafetyCast Report - Sept 2023
Maritime Cyber Assessment Annex Guide (MCAAG)_23JAN2023

MSC.1-Circ.1676 - Delays Affecting The Availability Of New GMDSS Equipment
NTSB SECOR POWER MIR22/26
SEACOR POWER Report of Investigation_Redacted
Safety Alert 3-23 on Configuration of DSC Radios
Safety Alert 12-22 on Radar SARTs

5. The Coast Guard Reports: Patrick Gallagher, Joe Hersey and others reported with 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 IMO/ITU Joint Experts Group will meet in October and provide input to NCSR 11, to include NAVDAT performance standards and progress VDES amendments to SOLAS. NCSR 11 should finalize the revision to Assembly Resolution A.1001(25), which broadens the recognition process for GMDSS mobile satellite system providers. NCSR 11 will consider a guideline for electronic nautical publications and also measures to enhance AIS security. With the potential effect on the Joint Experts Group of a government shutdown in October, it was noted that, in the past, exemptions were granted for several USCG members to attend IMO meetings. Those exemptions will be pursued in the event of a government shutdown. NCSR Meetings will remain on the Task Force agenda.

b. Update on Four Digit Numbering of VHF Channels: Joe Hersey noted that 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, and subsequent changes to FCC Regulations and public notice. The new RTCM Standard being developed by SC-101 will require 4 Digit numbering and the Task Force plans to query manufacturers to ascertain their plans to implement the change in their equipment. This item will be retained on the Agenda.

c. Report on IMO/ITU Joint Experts Group-18: Patrick Gallagher noted that the Joint Experts Group would be held 9-13 October 2023 and the results of that meeting would be addressed at a future Task Force.

d. LED Lighting – Report from SC-137: Joe Hersey, the Chair of RTCM SC-137, noted that the SC-137 standard on LED lighting interference to VHF and AIS was completed about a year ago. He advised that ABYC, in its navigation light standard, is making a normative reference to SC-137. Review by IEC (60533 whole ship std) is still moving ahead and interference to navigational lights will be included. This item will be retained on the Agenda.

e. SC-101 Action on Class D DSC Radios: Joe Hersey, the chairman of SC-101 reported that the SC is meeting regularly to produce recommended changes to the IEC Class D DSC Standard IEC 62238, addressing issues such as Distress Alerts received with no position and missing MMSI number. DSC Alarming, MMSI Reset, Four Channel Numbering and use of class D radios as Coast Stations are under review. The SC-101 recommendations were submitted to IEC in early September to complete the revisions. This item will be retained on the Agenda.

f. Report of MMSI Management ad hoc group: Joe Hersey reported that this ad hoc Group has been meeting regularly, with a scheduled meeting on 24 October. He noted that recreational boaters in the US are “licensed by rule.” The CGAUX has been involved and includes the MMSI in its courtesy boarding examination. This item will be retained on the Agenda. Due to MMSI issues included throughout the agenda, MMSI will become a primary agenda item in the future.

g. Radar SART Performance: As evidenced in the SEACOR POWER casualty, Joe Hersey reported that solid state radars don’t detect Radar SARTs or RACONS reliably. A survivor in that casualty had held on to the Radar SART but was not located. AIS SARTs have a much higher detection range. It was noted that it is possible to detune a radar to better receive the radar SART and that NMC training standard in fact addresses that. The TaskForce felt that a Safety Alert should be issued to encourage the use of AIS SARTs vice Radar SARTs. Eric Weber and Kurt Anderson suggested outreach to operators on this issue.

h. MSI Dissemination – NAVDAT vs Satellite: Patrick Gallagher reported that the USCG is updating its NAVDAT infrastructure. He noted that NAVTEX is incapable of transmitting S-100 updates due to the relatively huge file size for NBDP.

i. Transition of SARSAT Program from NOAA to Coast Guard: Layne Carter provided in email that there is nothing new to report regarding the transition of the SARSAT Program to the USCG.

j. NTSB Advocacy of PLBs for Most Mariners: Nothing further was reported on this issue. It will be deleted from the Task Force agenda until further progress is made that requires reporting and discussion.

k. Update Briefing on the Inmarsat Satellite System: No report issued. Joe Hersey noted the recent Fleet Broadband anomaly and wondered if there were any ramifications for GMDSS,

l. Update Briefing on the Iridium Satellite System: Kyle Hurst provided a briefing with the following status of Iridium GMDSS:

1. Record adoption of Iridium GMDSS during the summer.
2. Around 20% of vessels are installing two Iridium GMDSS terminals.
3. Many shipping companies installing Iridium GMDSS by default.
4. Iridium is working with SAR organizations to try to improve response coordination and timing for Iridium equipped vessels.
5. Also working with a software company that is looking to build an application that will optimize MSI received through an Iridium GMDSS terminal:
 - a. Auto-recognizing coordinates and key text.
 - b. Plotting MSI events on map.
 - c. Automatically activating alarm based on event proximity.

6. **FCC Reports:** Ghassan Khalek reported with the following highlights:

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 had been granted to allow the use of the new International Standard IEC 63269 for MOBs in the U.S. RTCM SC-119 has been reactivated to complete action. This item will remain on the agenda.

c. Rules change to enable new International EPIRB Specs to take effect in U.S: The Coast Guard petitioned the FCC to change their Rules to require EPIRBs sold in U.S. to have Integral GNSS. The FCC will grant waivers for this until the necessary changes to the Rules have been made. This item will be continued on the Agenda until completed.

d. Plans to Improve Routing of Emergency Calls: The FCC has embarked on a program to improve the prompt handling of emergency calls through the “911” call system for prompt routing of calls from vessels to Coast Guard RCCs. This item will be continued on the Agenda.

e. Impact on Termination of Great Lakes Agreement: The Agreement will expire on 2 November 2023. At that point, FCC rules Part 80 Subpart T (Great Lakes vessels) will have no treaty basis to continue. Regulated vessels of both countries on the Great Lakes will need to carry full GMDSS equipment suites and comply with licensing rules. FCC is looking into potential solutions but nothing new to report at this point.

f. Foreign Flag commercial vessels registered via USPS assigned block This item had been previously addressed under the Recreational Vessel Task Group. Some Foreign Flag Commercial 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 and it is still under investigation. This is a suggested topic for the next Coast Guard/FCC meeting. This item will be continued on the Agenda until resolved.

7. **Reports from other Governmental and International Agencies:**

a. Update from NOAA’s National Weather Service: Wayne Presnell provided an update on NWS activities. He noted the SafetyNet II transition will occur in the Dec23/Jan24 timeframe. Previously under US control, METAREA XVI has been taken over by Peru with US as the backup. NOAA/NWS is working on its backup functionality. Radiofax was noted as still being used a lot.

b. COSPAS/SARSAT Update: Ed Wendlandt noted RTCM and NOAA preparation for the upcoming open and closed council meetings of COSPAS/SARSAT in October. Two-way communications with emergency beacons is one of the notable topics on the agenda.

c. Army Corps of Engineers: No report available.

d. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA): No report available.

e. Canadian Maritime Issues: Alexandre Lavoie of Transport Canada noted that no decision had been made regarding the potential termination of NAVTEX in the Great Lakes. Canada is working with FCC and USCG regarding the termination of the Great Lakes Agreement.

f. CIRM: No report available but it was noted that CIRM will meet next in Izmir, Turkey 2-5 October 2023.

8. Reports and Issues, Recreational Vessel Group: Gene Danko's report included the following highlights:

a. Report of the National Boating Safety Advisory Committee: No report available.

b. Should Task Force reopen Beacon Proposal for R/Vs Operating Offshore?
Nothing new to report. NBSAC made a positive recommendation in 2012 to proceed with regulatory action. The results of a 2018 survey identified a significant number of R/Vs that acknowledge going more than 20 miles offshore, of which only about half were fitted with an appropriate beacon system. The Task Force Beacon proposal will not be opened pending potential Coast Guard regulatory action. This item will be retained on the Agenda.

c. Resolution of Duplicate MMSIs Issued by Sea Tow: Nothing new to report. This item will be carried forward on the Agenda until resolved.

d. New Program for Relaying MSI Alerts to Cell Phones That Register for the Voluntary Service: Nothing new to report. This service was previously referred to as "Aqua Alert" after a bill in Congress proposing an expansion of methods to disseminate MSI to interested users. The Coast Guard Districts would maintain a list of voluntary local subscribers who desired that broadcast MSI alerts be additionally sent by text to their cell phones. Although we don't know the outcome of the bill in Congress it has apparently already been implemented in one or more Districts. This item will be continued on the Agenda pending further developments.

e. Modify Voluntary Inspection Check List to Invite Discussion on MMSI Registration and Connection of GPS. The failure to properly register for an MMSI number is greatest among recreational vessels. The Task Force had been working with the Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety to pursue modifying the checklist for voluntary safety inspections. The intent is to open a dialog between the inspector and boat operators on the importance of registering for an MMSI number and the need to connect GPS receivers to VHF radios to provide often-missing position information. This Agenda item will be carried over until resolved.

9. Report and Issues of the Commercial Vessel Task Group: Johnny Lindstrom,

a. Shipboard Weather and Environmental Observations by AIS: Greg Johnson reported by email that he is working on transitioning the prototype system of shipboard weather observations to a more operational system hosted by NOAA NDBC. He noted that there is a lot

of interest internationally in sharing weather data over AIS for localized detection and notification of other vessels of sudden hazardous weather events.

b. MSIB 02-22k on CyberSecurity Trends and Insights: Nothing new to report. This item will be deleted from the Task Force agenda.

10. Reports and Issues of the Service Agents and Manufacturers Group: Joe Hersey noted that the Task Force is required to maintain the FCC checklists and this will be required for Great Lakes vessels in anticipation of the Great Lakes Agreement termination.

a. Update on NMEA Activities: The NMEA has signed an MOU with the US Power Squadron on voluntary training. A goal is to include the salient points of radio safety that the Task Group on Recreation Vessels has been trying to incorporate in the Coast Guard Boating Safety Guidelines for voluntary inspections.

b. NMEA a Candidate to Assign MMSI Numbers: The NMEA has been studying the issue of whether to join the other Assignment Agents in view of their membership of both Manufacturers and Service Agents. At the present time the outlook is guarded since they were unable to obtain a grant from the Coast Guard to support the cost. There is still the matter of the unresolved MOU between the Coast Guard and the FCC and the Assignment Agencies. This item will be continued on the Agenda until resolved.

11. Reports and Issues of the Training Task Group. Kurt Anderson reported with the following highlights:

a. New Issue - Training Group will review FCC Elements 3, 8 and 9 Relating to GMDSS Maintainers: Most of the work of maintaining the question pool for Operator Licenses is based on FCC Element 7 but the other Elements contain guidance appropriate to Maintainer Licenses. Minimal progress has been made on this issue. This item will be carried on the Agenda until the review has been completed.

b. Need to expand carriage requirements so that trainees can be trained on all equipment appropriate for Sea Areas A1, A2, A3 and A4. The Task Force will develop a Petition recommending special equipment requirements for Schools and Training Vessels to meet commercial stands, enabling students to train on all GMDSS equipment for all Sea Areas. This Agenda item will be carried forward.

c. 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. This item will be retained on the Agenda pending further developments.

d. Task Force Information Bulletins on Iridium Services: Both GMDSS Information Bulletins for Recreation Vessel Users were updated to acknowledge that Iridium has taken up full GMDSS service. The new Bulletins are on the Task Force website for review.

e. F/V Exemptions, Waivers & Tonnage Issues: It is clear that the many exemptions and waivers issued and the sometimes confusing tonnage rules complicate the training of new operators. This is a longstanding issue and remains in limbo. This will be carried over on the Agenda.

f. GMDSS Operator Requirements, Checks During Inspections: This new item seeks to identify the knowledge a GMDSS Maintainer needs to function as an inspector of GMDSS equipped ships including an evaluation of the adequacy of the training of those ships GMDSS Operators. Although allowed by the Regulations, the Task Force is on record as considering the mere holding a Maintainer License inadequate preparation for an inspector. It was noted that in the US, inspectors will often direct an operator to go through pre-departure check and can rapidly determine if the operator is competent. This item will be carried over on the Agenda.

12. GMDSS Modernization: Bob Markle reported that there are two “leftover” items from the IMO GMDSS Modernization project:

a. Revision of IMO Resolution A.1001: One item is the completion of a revision to Resolution A.1001, the criteria for GMDSS Mobile Satellite systems in the GMDSS. The work is being undertaken by a correspondence group coordinated by France. Their current draft will be considered next month at the meeting of the IMO/ITU Experts Group. The primary purpose of the revision is to align it with the new SOLAS Chapter IV providing for satellite systems other than geostationary systems and also allowing for regional systems. There seems to be general agreement on the draft but a number of details are being considered. The revised resolution will provide for continued acceptance of systems recognized under the existing resolution – they will not need to reapply.

b. Revision of IEC Standards: The second matter is the completion of revised IEC standards covering the GMDSS equipment performance standards recently adopted by IMO. Those performance standards come into force with the revised Chapter IV on 1 January 2024. The IEC process would not allow the companion test standards to be completed by then. As a result, IMO adopted a circular inviting Member States to permit the continued installation of GMDSS equipment meeting existing standards until 1 January 2028. This affects VHF, HF, MF, and Inmarsat-C equipment. IEC TC-80 has established a Maintenance Team to update the affected standards and projects publication of all affected standards by 2026.

13. Review Summary Record of 15 June 2023 and Continuing Work List. The summary record of that meeting is posted on the Task Force website and only minor corrections have been made. The Continuing Work Program is appended to each agenda and updated as needed.

14. Next Meetings of the GMDSS Task Force: The Task Force tentatively planned a virtual or hybrid meeting the week of 15 January 2024 to avoid conflicts with WRC23 in

Nov/Dec 2023. The draft agenda for the next meeting will include the date and details and RTCM will post the details in the What's New section of www.rtc.org once they are known.

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

15 September 2023

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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