

# GMDSS TASK FORCE

## Newsletter and Summary Record of 5 Sep 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 virtually on 5 Sep. 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](mailto: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 5 Sep 2024. The meeting was attended by 35 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>  
FCC Notice GMDSS SOLAS DA-24-682A1  
GMDSS\_and\_the\_Recreational\_Boater\_060525  
RVIB\_3\_060524  
ATSB Report on *Rosco Poplar* incident  
FCC Public Notice on Performance Standards for Radiocommunications equipment in Part 80
5. **Coast Guard Reports:** USCG reported the following highlights:
  - a. **Reports of the IMO NCSR-11 meeting:** Joe Hersey highlighted issues at the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Sub-Committee for Navigation, Communications, and Search & Rescue (NCSR 11) held 4-13 June 2024. There was no consensus on the radar SART issue. There was support for a Safety Notice on this issue to advise mariners. The USCG is developing a draft to send to MSC in Nov/Dec. Ghassan Khalek noted that NCSR considered interference of AIS by VHF Voice Transmissions and referred the matter to TC80. He also noted that development of performance standards for a digital navigational data system (NAVDAT) continued as was being referred to the Experts Group. The

Sub-Committee suggested that NAVDAT should not be a replacement for NAVTEX and that many Administrations were continuing with NAVTEX broadcasts. The development of amendments to SOLAS chapters IV and V performance standards and guidelines to introduce VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) continued and the Sub-Committee sent this to the Experts Group for further consideration. Steve Lett advised that NCSR had noted the opening of a new COSPAS-SARSAT channel above the middle of the band that may not be received by some survey equipment and 406 MHz DF equipment.

**b. ITU/IMO Joint Experts Group:** This group will be held in October.

**c. ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group:** Ghassan Khalek noted the ICAO/IMO JWG will meet the first week in Nov in Dublin. The new IAMSAR cycle will begin with that.

**d. MSI Dissemination – NAVDAT vs Satellite:** Jerry Ulcek reported that USCG is still using NAVTEX and NAVDAT is still a work in progress. The 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. Transmission of MSI to mariners is of paramount importance to USCG. Jean-Charles Cournillou noted the need for MSI dissemination over other than satellite and by two independent means of transmission.

**e. ITU-R WP5B Update:** Jerry Ulcek gave a verbal brief on WP5B. He noted the USCG had submitted input papers on digital voice comms in VHF maritime mobile band, Rec. M.1371 (AIS TDMA) and Rec. M.2092 (VDES). Steve Lett noted that Rec. M.585 allowed for an EPIRB protocol that COSPAS-SARSAT (C-S) did not read. C-S has introduced a patch to allow those messages to be read. Steve recommended the US weigh in on this issue and this was supported by Ross Norsworthy.

**f. Transition of SARSAT Program from NOAA to Coast Guard:** Ed Thiedeman noted that the USCG is developing new program management documents. The target date for the transition is 2026. NOAA, NASA, USAF, and USCG Memorandum of Understanding is being updated. NOAA will continue to operate the ground segment. USCG is currently updating operational and technical procedures.

**g. Recommendation to IMO MSC that all mariners carry PLBs:** Ed Thiedeman noted that USCG is preparing a submission to MSC 110 providing a draft circular to be developed at NCSR 13 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. Ed Wendlandt noted the review of an RTCM standard on MSLDs had been completed and was in comment resolution phase.

**h. MSLDs:** Ed Thiedeman, chair of SC-119 on MSLDs, noted that the draft MSLD standard SC11901.1 had been updated as CDV. The projected publication is hopefully by the end of 2024.

**i. 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. Some 2nm lights are being reported as failing the test. Review by IEC (60533 whole ship std) is now being considered in TC18 using the RTCM standard and interference by navigational lights will be included.

**j. Four Digit Numbering of VHF Channels:** Nothing new to report. The 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.

**k. 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. RTCM SC117 has been reactivated and is developing a standard or Publicly Available Specification (PAS) to address testing of AIS. It was noted that this is a major topic of discussion at the upcoming Joint Experts Group. RTCM has updated SC101's scope to include the development of a voluntary standard for resetting MMSI's in VHF radio equipment.

**l. Status of Class D DSC Radios:** Joe Hersey reported that SC101 is also developing recommended changes to the IEC Class D DSC Standard IEC 62238. This work should be finalized by the end of 2024. This group is also considering MMSI reset.

**m. Radar SART Performance:** Joe Hersey noted that radar SART had been addressed at length under NCSR. Solid state radars do not reliably detect Radar SARTs or RACONS until control settings are changed. For reference, radar operators need to adjust controls that 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.

**n. Satellite System – Pressing matters:**

Ed Thiedeman noted that Norway and Germany RCCs were becoming first RCCs for Iridium GMDSS for their region and Canada had applied for full association. It was also noted that Starlink had approached the USCG on becoming a GMDSS service provider.

**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. Joe Hersey and Ed Thiedeman are leading an offline WG to articulate these changes along with Kurt Anderson, Ghassan Khalek, Pat Gallagher, Eric Weber, and Malachi Clark. Joe Hersey noted that the entry into force for VHF handheld radios had been delayed until 1 January 2028. He also addressed the recent FCC Notice on Part 80 Standards incorporated by reference and the TF, specifically the WG, would endeavor to make comments within the 45 day comment period. Jean-Charles Cournillou provided an IMO cross reference of old and new standards to facilitate this process.

**7. MMSI WG and related issues:** Joe Hersey noted that the MMSI WG met on 04 September and the following issues are relevant.

**a. MMSI Management:** USCG MISLE database is now accepting MMSI data from all providers. Joe Hersey suggested there is a need to get the Power Squadron and ShineMicro MMSI databases into the USCG MISLE database. MMSI Working Group documents, including summary records of meetings, are available [here](#). Gene Danko provided procedures to notify USCG when a VHF radio is stolen to advise regarding MMSI. Joe Hersey noted the need for licensing and registration for radios on autonomous ships.

**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:** It was noted that Gene Danko had finalized revisions to GMDSS Information Bulletins for R/V and R/V with VHF. These items are now available on NAVCEN website. Gene Danko's report included the following highlights:

**a. Report of the National Boating Safety Advisory Committee:** Brian Moore from USCG Boating Safety noted NBSAC efforts regarding its efforts on reset of MMSI numbers. NBSAC will meet next in Oct.

**b. Aqua Alert Bill in Congress for Relaying MSI Alerts to Cell Phones That Register for the Voluntary Service:** Ed Thiedeman added 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. The USCG R&D Center is using multiple cellular providers at selected CG Sectors 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.

**9. Commercial Vessel Task Group:** Nothing to report.

**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 1, 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. This is about 90% complete and when complete will be reviewed by Kyle. 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.

**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. It was noted how some Port State Control officers overseas can be very difficult with mariner capabilities review.

**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 SC119 has been reactivated to update the relevant RTCM Standard 11901.2. AIS fishnet markers were addressed and an FCC position has not been finalized.

**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.

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

**a. NOAA/National Weather Service:** Wayne Presnell provided an update of NWS. NWS has been operational with SafetyCAST and SafetyNET. NWS is moving forward as a backup to Peru for Service Area 16.

**b. NOAA/SARSAT:** Ed Thiedeman addressed this during the USCG reports.

**c. Army Corps of Engineers:** Nothing to report.

**d. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA):** Nothing to report.

**e. NTSB:** No report available. However, an Australian Transportation Safety Board report on the *Rosco Poplar* incident was briefed by Lee Luft. This report was posted to the repository.

**e. Transport Canada:** Nothing to report.

**f. CIRM:** Nothing to report.

**14. Review Summary Record of 8 May 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, 12 December 2024 at 10:00 AM (EST, UTC -5). The draft agenda for the next meeting will be posted in the What’s New section of [www.rtc.org](http://www.rtc.org) once it is available.

## GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

5 September 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

File: TFSR-111.doc