

NATIONAL GMDSS TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of 9 January 2020 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 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 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 5000 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 9 January 2020 at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.

4. **Distribution of Information Papers:** The following Papers of interest were distributed and are available to all on the website: <https://www.joecel.com/GMDSSTaskForce>

Task Force/RTCM Joint Comment to Coast Guard on NAVTEX Proposal
Inmarsat News on RescueNET Exercises
Coast Guard Marine Safety Alert 09-19 on Passenger High-Risk Behavior
ECDIS Guidance Update in Change 2 to NVIC 01-16
FCC acceptance of Inmarsat sale to Bidco
NOAA Federal Register Notice Sunsetting Paper and Raster charts
Canadian Paper for NCSR Noting Expanded and Updated Navtex Service
Coast Guard Inspector's Guide to GMDSS
Coast Guard R&D CRADA on Shipboard Information Technology Network
FCC Report & Order enabling Iridium to provide GMDSS Services
GLOBAL MARITIME DISTRESS AND SAFETY SYSTEM Guide for CG
Marine inspectors & Port State Control Examiners
Canada Establishment of NAVTEX Service Areas – NCSR 7/Inf.8
GMDSS Question Pool proposal from Kurt Anderson

5. **The Coast Guard Reports:** Pat Gallagher and others reported with the following highlights:

a. Report on the Coast Guard Proposal to Discontinue Navtex Service: Pat Gallagher reported that the Coast Guard was evaluating the response to the public notice that heavily favored retention of Navtex service. The Task Force and the RTCM filed a joint response citing many problems with shifting to satellite broadcasting and advocating a cost benefit study before taking action. Another factor is the recent notice from Canada to the IMO that they were updating their Navtex service. Other government comments in favor of retaining Navtex service included the National Transportation Safety Board and the National Weather Service which lacked funding for increased satellite broadcasting. While retention of Navtex service is clearly favored by responders, the Coast Guard must find funding for long deferred maintenance in order to restore reliability to the service.

b. Report on Upcoming IMO NCSR Subcommittee in London: Pat Gallagher reported that a preparatory meeting had been held the day before at RTCM and the U.S. position on all issued had been confirmed. U.S. papers had been submitted on all issues of interest. It did not appear that there were any issues of significance regarding GMDSS Modernization.

c. Report on Canadian plans to Upgrade Navtex Service: Alexandre Lavoie reported on Canadian plans to update their Navtex system that had been notified to IMO. The U.S. and Canadian are aligned on most policy issues in shared and adjacent waters. There was renewed discussion about the Great Lakes Agreement (GLA) between Canada and the U.S. that exempts the Great Lakes from SOLAS requirements unless they are selectively required by national law. There are many hurdles to overcome to modify or terminate the GLA but most feel that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the countries would be preferred.

d. MMSIs for Diver Radios Not Associated With a Vessel: Joe Hersey reported that the FCC had agreed in principle to allow license-by-rule providers to issue 8MIDXXXXX MMSI blocks to users of VHF handhelds not associated with a specific boat, such as diver radios. BOATUS and USPS were both considering this, noting that software changes would be necessary.

e. Use of Four Digit Marine VHF Channel Numbers: Joe Hersey reported that some manufacturers of high end VHF radios were already offering the option of displaying either two or four number displays. This conversion will take place over time and does not seem to be an operational problem.

f. LED Lighting Update from Chairman of RTCM SC-137: Joe Hersey, the Chairman of SC-137, gave an update on progress toward developing a standard to deal with LED lighting interference to VHF maritime radios and Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). There is a good article on this in the current issue of the Marine Electronics Journal. This new Special Committee has submitted proposed installation guidelines for inclusion in the NMEA 0400 Installation Standard, and has completed an LED EMC demonstration test plan. Tests await Coast Guard funding and contract support. Ship Radio Inspection Check Lists have already been updated and plans made for a new international standard once demonstration tests are completed since none currently exists.

g. RTCM SC-119 and IEC TC-80 to Review Man Overboard Devices. RTCM SC-119 was reactivated with Tom Pack of ACR as chairman, and will review its standard in conformance with the latest edition of the ITU-R DSC standard Rec.M.493-15. IEC TC80 is also developing an MOB standard based upon AIS and DSC. While the ITU-R now requires DSC MOBs to also have an AIS capability, RTCM and IEC await decisions by IMO and ITU-R as to whether AIS MOBs will require a DSC capability.

h. Availability of Coast Guard HF Communications Stations for HF Test Calls. This item originated from a complaint by a GMDSS Inspector that it was difficult to get the Coast Guard Communications Stations to answer test calls on 4207.5 KHz. There have been instances when this supposedly automatic system has been down for maintenance but after the previous Task Force meeting we published phone and email addresses to reach the Watch Officer managing all Coast Guard HF radio operations.

6. Introduce Friends of the Task Force for Updates on Their Activities:

a. Frank August Reported on the One Web Satellite System and the Mobile Satellite Users Association (MSUA): Frank August is the Secretary on the Board of MSUA which has become a big player in satellite services for mobile applications and provides a good vantage point for monitoring the various services available. Frank also reported on One Web's ambitious plan to launch 30 satellites in a single launch ending up with 650 satellites in about three years with full global coverage including the Arctic and the Antarctic.

b. CDR Chad Thompson Reported on the Coast Guard's Present and Projected use of Drones: Commander Thompson's brief noted that the Coast Guard envisions wide spread use of drones in long, medium and short range applications both cutter based and shore based. Many of these applications will be phased in gradually as the budget allows. The Scan Eagle system partnered with the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Agency will be deployed on the National Security cutters and later on Icebreakers and Offshore Patrol Cutters. DOD regulations prohibit use of foreign made drones and the FAA directs air space control. Short range commercial systems are also authorized. Long range shore-based search operations are envisioned but are not currently in use.

c. Peg Phillips Reported on the Current Program of the National Safe Boating Council (NSBC): Peg Phillips is the Executive Director of the NSBC which is launching a new campaign aimed at getting boaters to wear life jackets. The Task Force worked with NSBC in an earlier campaign "Saved by the Beacon" promoting wider use of EPIRBs and PLBs. There is no federal law requiring that life jackets be worn and state laws only require children under 13 to wear jackets (under 6 in Florida). The compelling drowning statistics show that 85% of the victims were not wearing a jacket and two thirds of them were good swimmers. The campaign aims to create a culture where experienced boaters set the example and wearing a jacket becomes the norm.

7. The FCC Reports by Rebecca Williams of the FCC Gettysburg, PA Office and others with the following highlights:

a. MMSI's not Registered with ITU MARS for all R/Vs Going Foreign: FCC for a time failed to notify the ITU Maritime Mobile Access and Retrieval System (MARS) database of MMSIs of ship station licenses marked as going on foreign voyages. They have since corrected the problem but are unable to retroactively notify ITU of MMSIs assigned to previously registered licenses. Licensees, however, can resolve the problem prior to making a foreign voyage by simply trivially modifying their ship station license any time or at renewal time, such as by changing "Road" to "Rd" in their address. Modified licenses are notified to the ITU. The FCC indicated there would be no cost to boaters for modifying their licenses.

b. RTCM Petition for Extensive Update to FCC Rules, Part 80: There has been no new action on this long pending issue, but an extensive update to the Aeronautical Rules was recently published that raises hope that the Maritime Rules Update will soon follow.

8. Reports and Issues, Recreational Vessel Group: George Hallenbeck reported with the following highlights:

a. Modify Voluntary Inspection Check List to Invite Discussion on MMSI Registration and Connection of GPS. 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 hopefully modify the latter's check list for voluntary inspections. The intent is not to collect more data but to open a dialog between the inspector and boat operators on the importance of registering with NOAA for an MMSI number and the need to connect GPS receivers to VHF radios. The reluctance of Boating Safety to modify their list and the possibility that other issues (such as LED lighting interference) may also need to be highlighted suggests that a separate check list for voluntary inspectors may be an alternative solution.

b. Sea Tow Discontinuing Issue of MMSI Numbers. George Hallenbeck reported that Sea Tow had elected to stop issuing MMSI Numbers and has left the problem of duplicated licenses unresolved. The Power Squadrons remain willing to take over that block and manage its existing MMSI holders once the FCC and Coast Guard grant approval, but are unable to assume responsibility for resolving the duplication problem created by Sea Tow. The FCC and Coast Guard are coordinating a joint letter to the USPS authorizing them to temporarily but indefinitely continue assigning MMSIs while Memorandum of Understanding discussions continue. Once that letter is signed, and the USPS remains willing, the FCC and the Coast Guard will coordinate a second letter to Sea Tow and the USPS authorizing the transfer of MMSI responsibility to the USPS but absolving the USPS from responsibility for correcting outstanding duplications.

c. Coast Guard/DHS Response to Challenge Competition: Marty Jackson provided an update on this prize contest to develop innovative ways to enhance detection of people in the water. Four devices are being tested and the results are expected soon, we will request a further update at our next meeting.

9. Reports and Issues of the Service Agents and Manufacturers Group: Hugh Lupo was unable to attend the meeting and there had been little activity on the agenda items listed for review. Due to the press of time, the four pending issues are carried forward and the status of each is copied from the summary record of the September 2019 meeting:

a. Watch Continuity should be Maintained when VHF Radios are used in the Public Address Mode. The issue applies to compulsory fitted small passenger vessels with more than six passengers such as whale watching vessels, some of which operate their VHF in a Public Address (PA) mode for the entire trip rendering the channel 16 guard inoperative. This problem was addressed in the recently updated small passenger ship radio inspection checklist and should be further clarified in the FCC Part 80 rulemaking.

b. Testing during inspections should verify that DSC Radios transmit Position: Inspections have revealed that not all radios transmit the position information automatically. This is a requirement for Class A radios but was prohibited by Rec. ITU-R M. 493-14 in class D, E, and H (handheld) radios. ITU-R M 493-15 reinstated position report request capability in all Class D, E and H (handheld) VHF DSC radios. ETSI Standard EN 300 338-4 applies to Class E radios. The Task Force will review whether any further action is needed.

c. 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 Training Vessels to enable students to train on all equipment they may find on ships operating in all Sea Areas.

d. Are Solid State Radars Incompatible with Racons and Radar SARTs? This item is retained while the Task Force determines whether further action is needed: Joe Hersey reported that unless the radar's peak transmitter power is high enough to trigger the racon or radar SART, the radar will not be compatible with either device. IMO requires that X-Band radars carried on ships subject to the SOLAS Convention be compatible with both racons and radar SARTs. Solid state radars of sufficient peak pulse power can be compatible with racons and SARTs, but lower power (e.g. FMCW) radars will not be compatible. Note that RTCM's recently adopted RTCM standard 11201.0 for Marine Radar Equipment for Ships Not Required to Comply with SOLAS Radar Carriage Requirements, does not require compatibility with racons or radar SARTs

10. Reports and Issues of the Commercial Vessel Task Group. Rich Beattie moderated the discussion with the following highlights:

a. Revised Radio Inspection Checklists for GMDSS; Small Passenger Vessels; Bridge to Bridge; Great Lakes Vessels; and a New Checklist for AIS Inspections: We can now report that the final versions of the checklists have been posted at: <https://www.fcc.gov/eb-ship-inspection-checklists>. The USCG has posted the AIS Check List at: https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/AIS/USCG_AIS_Inspection_Checklist19_10_01.pdf, There have been a few minor corrections to the lists which have been posted.

b. Developments in Cybersecurity. There were no new reports under this item. The Coast Guard has promulgated outlines of Cybersecurity goals for various segments of the maritime industry, most recently addressing port facilities. IEC TC80 is developing a new standard IEC 63154 *Maritime Navigation and Radiocommunication Equipment and Systems Cybersecurity – General requirements, methods of testing and required test results*, and has asked national committees for comments on its committee draft. The Task Force is awaiting

development of a Cybersecurity game plan by the RTCM to see how we might best support that plan.

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

a. GMDSS Question Pool Revisions: The Training Group had made good progress with the updated GMDSS Operator Question Pool that was delivered to the FCC early in October. The FCC and/or the Coast Guard through the National Maritime Center (NMC) should notify the Colems and Training Schools when to shift to the new Question Pool. This Question Pool will probably need to be updated again in 2020 to deal with end of life for the Inmarsat F-77 SES and possible decisions on SITOR. The Question Pool for Restricted GMDSS Operator will also need revision in 2020.

b. Whether COLEMs and Training Schools are Actually Following Coast Guard and FCC Guidance in Generating 100 Questions Exams? This item and related issues have been raised before but have not yet been fully addressed by the government authorities. Russ Levin will contact the responsible parties at the NMC and the FCC to resolve any pending issues and provide guidance to the Task Force Training Group.

c. Whether COLEMs and Training Schools are Actually Following Coast Guard NMC Guidance in Assessment of all GMDSS Proficiencies? This item and related issues have also been raised before but have not yet been fully addressed by government authorities. Russ Levin will contact responsible parties at the NMC to resolve any pending issues and provide guidance to the Task Force Training Group.

d. Tightening Qualification Requirements to Ensure Competency of Holders of the GMDSS Maintainers License: The Task Force has long believed that holding a GMDSS Maintainers License was insufficient evidence of competency for persons conducting GMDSS inspections. During the afternoon workshop session it was suggested that this goal be dropped in view of the length of time since the FCC started issuing lifetime licenses.

12. GMDSS Modernization. Bob Markle noted briefly that modernization was still an active project at the International Maritime Organization. It is helpful that Iridium has been accepted as a GMDSS satellite service provider and has now been cleared to provide formal GMDSS services as of 1 January 2020. Among issues yet to be resolved is a new draft of SOLAS Chapter IV. Iridium has announced an agreement with seven manufacturers who are planning to produce GMDSS certified versions of the Iridium Ship Earth Station. Since the IMO Master Plan of GMDSS Shore Facilities is now on line, it is unclear whether there will be a printed version.

13. Review Summary Record of 19 September 2019 and Continuing Work List. The summary record of this meeting is posted on the Task Force website and no corrections have been suggested. The Continuing Work Program is appended to each agenda and updated as needed. The Task Force reviewed the Continuing Work List in a special afternoon session after this Task Force meeting and the revised version is attached to this record. The Working Group also considered needed updates to the website including a review of all GMDSS Information

Bulletins and suggested deletions from the List of General GMDSS Documents. It is hoped that the revised Information Bulletins can be approved at the next Task Force meeting.

14. Next Meetings of the GMDSS Task Force: The next regular Task Force meeting will be held at 9:30 am on 14 May 2020 at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The follow-on meeting is scheduled for 21 or 24 September during the Joint NMEA/RTCM Annual meetings in Orlando, Florida at the DoubleTree Universal Resort 21-25 September 2020. NOAA's Beacon Manufacturers Workshop will meet Friday 25 September 2019.

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST (As Revised)

9 January 2020

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 replacement or update of current Great Lakes Agreement with an MOU or equivalent document. (TF)
8. Advocate voluntary carriage of VHF and EPIRB/PLBs by all vessels offshore (TF)
9. Monitor of FCC policy and practice on MMSI assignments (TF)
10. Monitor non-GMDSS systems: AIS, LRIT, SSAS, VDES, VMS, & E-Navigation (TF)
11. Recommend means to improve Distress Alerts by Cell Phone & Internet (TF)
12. Advocate mandatory Distress Beacons on R/V more than 3 miles offshore (TF)
13. Advocate use of the Alaska AIS Monitor Network for VHF Distress Guard (TF)
14. Monitor Developments in Cybersecurity and advise membership (TF)
15. Review GMDSS concepts and make modernization recommendations (MOD)
16. Monitor automatic response from USCG HF Commstas to test calls for validation of HF-DSC performance (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 & Nav. 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 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) Modernization Task Group

Please refer questions and proposals to Captain Jack Fuechsel at 703-963-3747 or gmdsstf@gmail.com. If you have an Internet server with spam filters, please authorize receipt of messages from gmdsstf@gmail.com

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