AMERC News

Issue 47 – Incorporates Circular 261 November 2013

Editorial

Welcome to issue 47 of AMERC News - *which doubles as* **Circular 261** *and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors/ examiners by their AMERC centre contact.*

In this issue we have the our usual brief on the most recent ***Maritime Consultation Group*** (MCG - Page 2) - reflecting relevant items covered in the AMERC Executive Committee (EC) meeting earlier that day and including: an update on the use of ***TRANSAS touch-screen simulators;*** an item on the ***Revised charges for UK GMDSS GOC, ROC and LRC*** examinations; a follow-up item regarding progress on ***writing and vetting new examination papers;*** a reminder of the current ***procedure to be followed in the event of EPIRB/PLB False Activation***; a reminder to examiners about 5- and 2-minute warnings when ***invigilating General Knowledge papers***; and a note regarding ***Certificates of Equivalent Competence - Authority to Operate***; and another regarding ***revalidating the STCW endorsement of UK GMDSS GOC and ROC certificates.*** A revision to previously published information on the status of ***Inmarsat-B, Inmarsat-M and Inmarsat-mini-M*** is also included – as are the usual ***quarterly examination statistics*** from the National Administration Centre (NAC).

We are (again) missing any ***Member Profile –*** if those of you who haven't featured so far would like your centre to be 'profiled' – please let me know.

We do have another '***GMDSS Criss-Crossword'*** (Page 3) to help stretch candidates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty List of Radio Signals** (ALRS) publications. The answers to puzzle 46 are also included.

Explanation Please? (Page 4-5) Responds to a query raised by a seagoing 2/O on the Pacific route, regarding DSC weekly test calls – the reply is my own and does not necessarily reflect official AMERC policy – and any other advice that might help the enquirer (and anyone else reading the item) is welcome!

Tales from the Key-Side, in common with our 'Member Profile' page, is also taking a rest this issue – as we haven't had any sea-stories (or classroom stories) - or just anything that might help brighten up our day L

Maritime Miscellaneous (page 6-8) features an offer of lorry-loads of historic marine radio kit to anyone with the muscle (and transport facilities) to collect from its present home in the Southampton area.

As usual – my sincere thanks to those of you who've provided feedback, questions and other information for including in the News

Sláinte! *Ian W*

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The ***Maritime Consultation Group*** *(MCG)* meets regularly - currently four times each year – for the AMERC Executive Committee 'Open Meeting'. MCG membership consists of AMERC Executive Committee (EC) representatives; the AMERC Chief Examiner; the MCA Chief Examiner and/or the MCA Deck & GMDSS Team Leader; and AMERC/industry specialists.

The latest meeting was held in Kendal, in September. The following items reflect discussions at MCG (full minutes will be circulated appropriately) - and/or associated items that are of immediate interest to Members and training centres. The items are placed according to size - not in any 'priority' order!

TRANSAS touch-screen simulation: The Group has agreed that touch-screen technology can be used in place of hard-panels, with AMERC-approved GMDSS simulators -- for GOC, ROC and LRC training and examinations. The amendment will be included in a revised AMERC GMDSS Examination Handbook, due to be published 1 January 2014.

Examination Fee Revision: Examination fees will change w.e.f. January 1st 2014. The new fees are: GOC UK £160/Overseas £110; ROC UK £140/Overseas £100; LRC £140; Satcom Module (when taken as a separate examination) £60.

Future Examination Paper update: Following input from examiners on the (AMERC) examiner's forum, the working group will be progressing the writing of the next series of examination papers; RT exam; and associated Operational Performance Test (OPT) scripts - with the view to having final working papers ready for Examiner's Panel in June 2014.

EPIRB/PLB False Alerts: Following reports that the out of date procedure for dealing with false EPIRB/PLB alerts is still being promulgated, it was agreed to remind all centres that – in the event of a false EPIRB/PLB alert being transmitted - the correct procedure is to switch-off immediately and inform the appropriate Coast Station/RCC.

Inmarsat-B, M and Mini-M Update. Further to the earlier release, Inmarsat has now decided to retain the Inmarsat-B service until end-December 2016 - and not 2014 as previously reported (AMERC News 44 of February 2013 refers). It is still the intention to retire Inmarsat-M as a service on 30 December 2014; and maritime mini-M service on 30 December of 2016. As previously reported - Inmarsat intends to work with its partners, during the intervening period, to successfully transition their maritime mini-M customers to the FleetBroadband and GSPS FleetPhone services.

General Knowledge (GK) paper invigilation: Examiners are reminded that they should give 5-minute and 2-minute warnings, when approaching the end of the 25-minutes allowed for this paper.

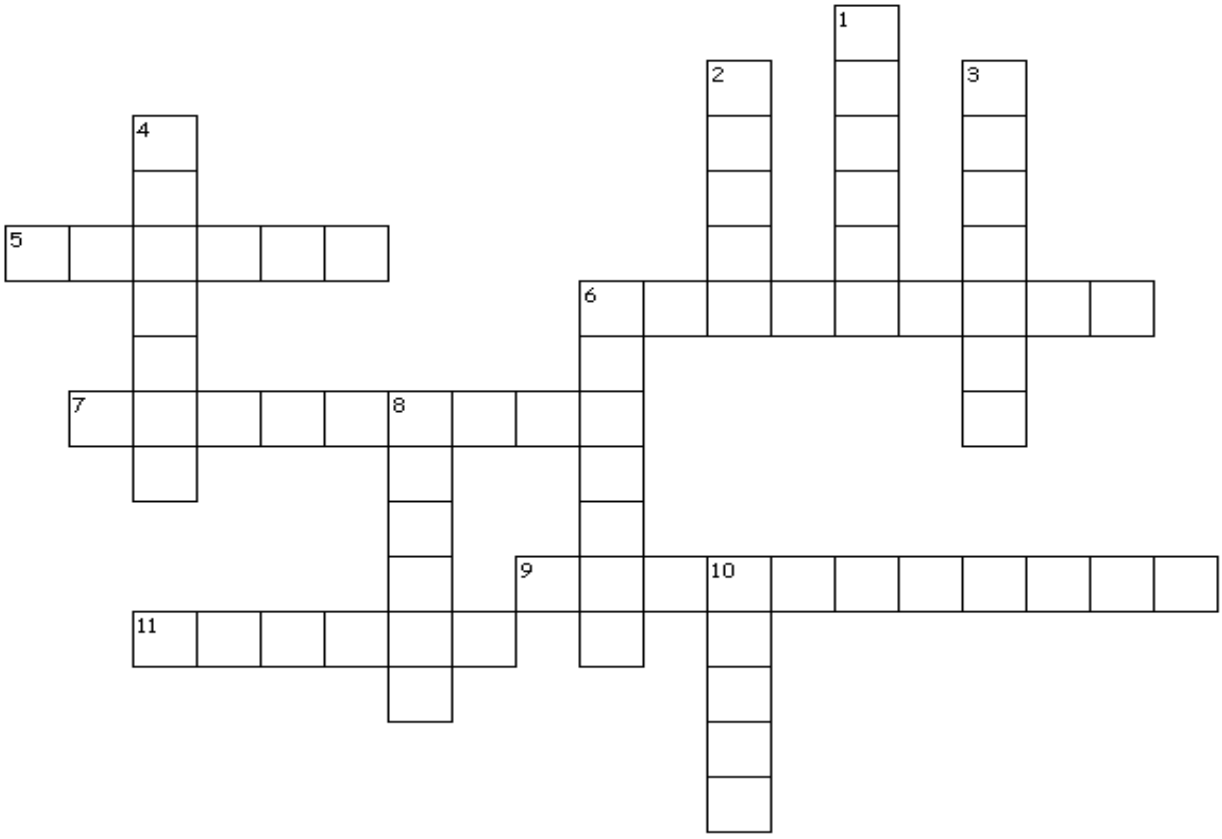
GMDSS Certificate of Equivalent Competence (CeC): Not all non-UK GMDSS certificates include an Authority to Operate (ATO), as required by persons serving onboard British-flagged vessels. Holders of such certificates are required to write to the MCA, who will issue an ATO where appropriate.

GMDSS Revalidation: a reminder that anyone who does not qualify for revalidation of the STCW endorsement in their GOC/ROC certificate, due to insufficient sea-time during the preceding five years, must comply with the procedure stated on the AMERC website - which includes completing the GOC/ROC examination.

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period ***1 April 2013 – 28 June 2013*** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1st time)		PASSED (1st attempt)		% PASSED 1ST ATTEMPT	
UK GOC	346	(303)	302	(265)	265/303	(>87%)
ALL GOC	747	(636)	628	(528)	528/636	(>83%)
UK ROC	81	(80)	79	(78)	78/80	(>97%)
ALL ROC	118	(115)	114	(111)	111/115	(>96%)
LRC	67	(66)	66	(65)	65/ 66	(>98%)

GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 47 - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS, ***where appropriate***



Across

5. NAVAREA XVIII co-ordinator
6. Port city on the northern coast of Columbia; and in Spain's Region of Murcia
7. Maryland port city situated approximately 50 miles NNW of Washington D.C.
9. VHF and MF DSC station, and port city, on Russia's Baltic coast
11. Overseas department and region of France, in the Mozambique Channel

Down

1. The other main port in southern Mozambique, situated in the main industrial area to the west of 8-down.
2. Operational MRCC and VHF DSC station in Slovenia
3. Port of ..... the largest harbour in Denmark
4. (4,3) VHF, MF and HF DSC Station, and NAVTEX station, in Southern Vietnam
6. Port city on India's Coromandel coast
8. Port city, capital of Mozambique
10. Turkish port city; and MF DSC and NAVTEX station, in the Aegean Sea

Issue 46 answers: ***DOWN***: 1. Mersey; 2. Charleville; 4. Talcahuano; 7. France; 9. Juliett; 10. Mike.
ACROSS: 3. Bering; 5. Tasmania; 6. Bass; 8. Meteorological; 11. Limasol; 12. Devonport.

Explanation Please?

This is the area for questions that may puzzle you – whether you're a trainer without a specific 'radio' background; a seagoing operator who's finding that the 'real world' doesn't seem to be fully in tune with what you learned in the classroom (or with what you've read in publications – official or otherwise); or because it's not particularly clear why a specific answer to an examination question is necessary when it appears that other answers may also appear appropriate.
The exchange below arose from an enquiry from a seagoing Deck Officer who was having trouble with Port State Control w.r.t. his vessel's approach in making DSC Test Calls.

Question: I wonder if you could help me with a small issue, more out of curiosity than anything else.

When recently visiting Auckland, the Singaporean-registered container vessel on which I'm sailing was criticized by a PSC Inspector because our weekly MF/HF test calls had been conducted with other vessels and not coast stations. I made that point that, as we are engaged in a primarily trans-pacific trade, coast stations are rarely in range and that it is even rarer for them to acknowledge a test message when they are.

However, the Inspector maintained that this is most incorrect and was of the opinion that no test call is better than one to another vessel. Fortunately we avoided the issuing of a deficiency on the grounds that I am a recently promoted 2/O and so we were able to plead naivety.

Personally, I don't understand what the difference is between a test call conducted with a coast station or vessel. Can you please advise me if there is any reason, technological or regulatory, why a test call to another vessel should be inferior to that sent to a coast station, or is this just an example of an overzealous PSC inspector looking for trouble?

Any guidance you can give would be much appreciated.

Answer: Firstly - no technical reason why a ship-ship test call, using the test call protocol, shouldn't prove your system works on the DSC Distress & Safety calling frequency (which is the reason for making the weekly test call);

Regulatory? Therein the potential problem. Test calls are supposed to be conducted with a coast station but, as you recognise, you often don't get a reply.

Reason? Some stations are fitted for 'automatic' acknowledgement; others manual.

As you might imagine - you are more likely to get a response from an 'auto' station than a busy (or minimum-manned) 'manual' station - and that response would be quickly received (within a minute or so). Unfortunately: there's no list of stations showing which do 'auto ack' - and not all stations monitor all MF/HF DSC Distress & Safety calling frequencies - so no point in calling on 12/16MHz if a station only monitors 8MHz (ALRS Vol 5 has a list of the HF DSC stations, and their frequencies).

Possible solution? Try your test call with one or two Coast Stations – on different frequencies - and then, if no Acknowledgement received, log that fact. Then test with a ship and record that

result also (i.e. to prove your system works - after all, what would the PSC say if all you had in your log was repeated entries stating 'test call failed'?).

For your next Pacific crossing I'd suggest you try the following stations (which all *monitor* 4/6/8/12 and 16MHz - though the two USA stations only offer DSC 'Test Call Ack' on 4MHz):

NZ - Taupo (MMSI 005120010)
Australia - Charleville/Wiluna (MMSI 005030001)
Indonesia - Jayapura (MMSI 005250007)
Japan - Tokyo (MMSI 004310001)
Chile - Valpariso (MMSI 007251860)
USA - CAMSPAC (Point Reyes California - MMSI 003669990)
Hawaii - Honolulu (MMSI 003669993)

Frequencies? During daytime conditions try 8, 12 or 16MHz, depending on range - darkness conditions try 12/8/6/4MHz (again – depending on range).

By daytime/darkness I'm referring to the path between yourself and the receiving station - so N-S easy; E-W requires a bit more thought!

On the assumption that one or more station(s) might be 'manual' - don't reset your kit until it displays 'test call failed' - which would normally be after about 3 minutes.

For the two USA stations (CAMSPAC and Hawaii) that only offer DSC Test Call Ack' on 4MHz, there's no point in trying them unless (a) you have complete darkness conditions between you and the station concerned; or (b) you are within ground-wave coverage of the station (maybe up to around 150-200 miles on 4MHz, when using a 150/250Watt ship's SSB radio).

I'll publish your item (ID withheld!) in upcoming AMERC News along with my response, to see if it elicits any better thoughts from other readers - and I'd be pleased to publish your findings from a future trip also - if you can let me know the outcome?

Reminder to all readers.
Before making a DSC Test Call on any of the Distress & Safety frequencies –which are 'simplex' channels – tune your SSB receiver to the desired frequency (or stop the 'scan' on your DSC Controller, if you have one that will let you monitor the frequency on 'speaker), and check that no DSC transmissions are already in progress ... this should avoid interfering with such calls (which, in any case, could itself cause your test call to fail!).
DSC, being a form of 'radio telex', has a distinct 'trilling' sound – the same as you'll hear when running the 'test' on your NAVTEX receiver.

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Maritime Miscellaneous 1: **Offered: historic radio haul (collection only) – the following article was first published in The Telegraph – the member's magazine for Nautilus – and is reproduced here by permission:**

A Nautilus member is hoping to find a good home for some historic maritime radio equipment.

Former radio officer Clive Evans said equipment rescued from the Royal Navy's HMS Collingwood museum is being offered free to enthusiasts in return for a donation to their favourite maritime charity.

The equipment was retrieved by the Maritime Radio Museum Society – the volunteer curators of the Fort Perch Rock Marine Radio Museum in the Wirral – and moved to a warehouse in Southampton after the naval museum downsized.

Mr Evans, who is also the honorary secretary of the Wirral radio society and a member of the Liverpool Marine Radio and Electronics Society, said they were keen to ensure that the equipment that many ex-officers had spend time lovingly restoring would not be scrapped.

Mr Evans said the only 'catch' is that those interested in getting a piece of history will have to collect it themselves from where it is now stored at a warehouse in Southampton. That will be no mean feat, considering a long-haul truck was needed to transport transmitters that may be as big as a house door or receivers the size of a desktop to their current resting place.

Using £500-worth of donations for truck haulage from various benefactors, the society moved the equipment to Southampton to dispose of it, Mr Evans said.

If interested, email Mr. Evans: georgecliveevans@yahoo.co.uk

Those who receive this free historic equipment will be asked to make a donation to a maritime charity, a Merchant Navy fund, the RNLI or the Radio Officer's Association.

Further to the article above, Clive has provided AMERC News with the following list of equipment (example photos from The Telegraph):

Museum Code	***Description (Marconi equipment)***
CM01456	Loadstar II D MF/HF DF Receiver
CM01445	Cabinet Type 1200A with MF/HF Transmitter and Power Supply
CM01455	Guardian IV Receiver
CM01454	Aerial / Dummy Load Selector Switch
CM01453	Seamew II Transmitter/Receiver Type 972A
CM01452	Atalanta Receiver
CM01444	Loadstar 4 Receiver
CM01450	Lifeguard Auto Watch Receiver
CM01451	DF Receiver Type 758J
CM01448	Lifeguard Auto Watch Receiver
CM01443	DS100 VHF Transmitter / Receiver
CM01439	Power Supply / Modulator / Inverter
CM01409	DF Loop Aerial

CM01405	Falcon 1 Transmitter	CM01406	Falcon 1 Receiver
CM01408	Apollo Receiver	CM01407	Aerial / Dummy Load Selector Switch
CM01426	Load Star III D MF/HF DF Receiver		
CM01437	Artificial Aerial	CM01417	Solas III A Survival Radio
CM01418	Solas IV Survival Radio		
CM01416	Emergency Transmitter / Receiver (Yellow Box)		
CM00099	Dynatron Radio Receiver		

CM01420	**Commandant HS Transmitter Cabinet comprising of :-**		
CM01420	RF Amplifier	CM01421	Synthesiser
CM01427	**Challenger Cabinet Transmitter Cabinet comprising of:-**		
No Number	Transmitter Antenna Switch Unit	No Number	RF Unit
No Number	Synthesiser Unit	No Number	Transmitter Power Unit
No Number	Cabinet Power Supply Unit		
	Radio Office Desk / Rack comprising of:-		
CM01431	Salvor 4 Antenna Coupling Unit	CM01433	Auto key 2X
CM01434	Lifeguard 3	CM01435	Station Control Unit
CM01430	Key Pad Panel	No Number	Salvor III Transmitter / Receiver

No Number	Distribution / Charging Unit	No Number	Blank Panel
	Other Radio Equipment List		
CM01440	ITT Marine Transmitter IMR 113	CM01441	ITT Marine Aerial Tuning Unit
No Number	Salvor III Transmitter / Receiver	No Number	Radio Office Telephone

No Number Metal rack with speakers and bag of plugs and cables

Go on – admit it you lot - you're grinning and getting them lamps a'swinging .... have a word with Mr. Stobbart – assuming you've still got room in your garage, that is!

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Maritime Miscellaneous 2: A US citizen recently petitioned the FCC, proposing that the Commission recognize a GMDSS General Operator's Certificate issued by the United Kingdom Maritime and Coastguard Agency (UKMCA) as meeting the requirements for an FCC GMDSS Radio Operator's License. The petition was denied. The full decision can be found at: http://www.fcc.gov/document/richard-monjure-gmdss-radio-operator-rulemaking-petition-denial

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