



Editorial

Welcome to issue 48 of AMERC News - *which doubles as Circular 262 and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors/examiners by their AMERC centre contact.*

In this issue we have the a 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: information about **updated training requirements for GMDSS certificate holders working as Radio Operators**; a progress report on the **new examination series** due to start on 1st January 2014; changes required to **Course Completion Certificates**; updated **procedures for dealing with new centre applications**; and information on the **new edition of the AMERC Examination Administration Handbook**; a note about existing **ECC & AEV contracts**; and **notice of AGM** – along with the latest **quarterly examination statistics** from the National Administration Centre (NAC).

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 47 are also included – **now with hyperlinks** for those interested in learning more about the featured locations/stations.

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.

Explanation Please? (Page 4) Responds to a query about **EPIRB False Alerts procedure** covered in AMERC News 47 – including guidance on deciding which is the 'appropriate' RCC to inform. (The reply is my own and does not necessarily reflect official AMERC policy). Any other advice that might help the enquirer (and anyone else reading the item) is welcome!

Feedback was also received on the subject of **DSC Test Calls** – that feedback included in this section.

Tales from the Key-Side and **Maritime Miscellaneous** common with our 'Member Profile' page, are 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 .. contributions/suggestions welcome ...

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

Sláinte!

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STOP PRESS – MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

A reminder that applications for membership of the Association must be received by 31st January – this being the annual cut-off date .

[For more information see the 'Join AMERC' page on the AMERC website.](#)

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 London, in December 2013. The following items reflect discussions at MCG (full minutes will be circulated appropriately) and/or associated items that are of interest to Members and training centres. The items are placed according to size - not in any ‘priority’ order!

GMDSS Certificate-holders – requirement for updating training: The 2010 Manila Amendments to the STCW Convention 1978 has included, amongst other things, a requirement for holders of a GMDSS certificate **and who is working as a Radio Operator** to undertake updating training. The specific updating training, required at five-year intervals, is:

- (i) Proficiency in Personal Survival Techniques (PST) (STCW A-VI/1-1); and
- (ii) Proficiency in Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting (FP&FF) (STCW A-VI/1-2)

Note that, for service onboard UK-flagged vessels, this updating training must be either approved or recognised by the MCA. More information can be found in Marine Information Note - MIN 469 (M) - from the MCA.

Future Examination Paper update: The sub-group tasked with formulating the next examination series has put together draft papers and practical examination task lists, with the view to standardising, wherever possible, the approach to GOC, ROC and LRC exams. It is intended to present the final drafts to Examiner’s Panel, following AGM, in June 2014 - with the view to implementing the new series on 1st January 2015.

GMDSS Course Completion Certificates (GOC/ROC). Course providers should have received, from the Secretary, information on the new Course Completion Certificate requirement. The main changes were:

- (i) Include your MCA Approvals Number on the certificates; and
- (ii) Revised wording for the STCW statement.

Full details, including example certificate formatting, were included with the Secretary’s mailing.

AMERC Examination Administration Handbook: An updated version of the AMERC Examination Administration Handbook is now available for download (PDF file) from: <http://www.amerc.ac.uk/gmdss>

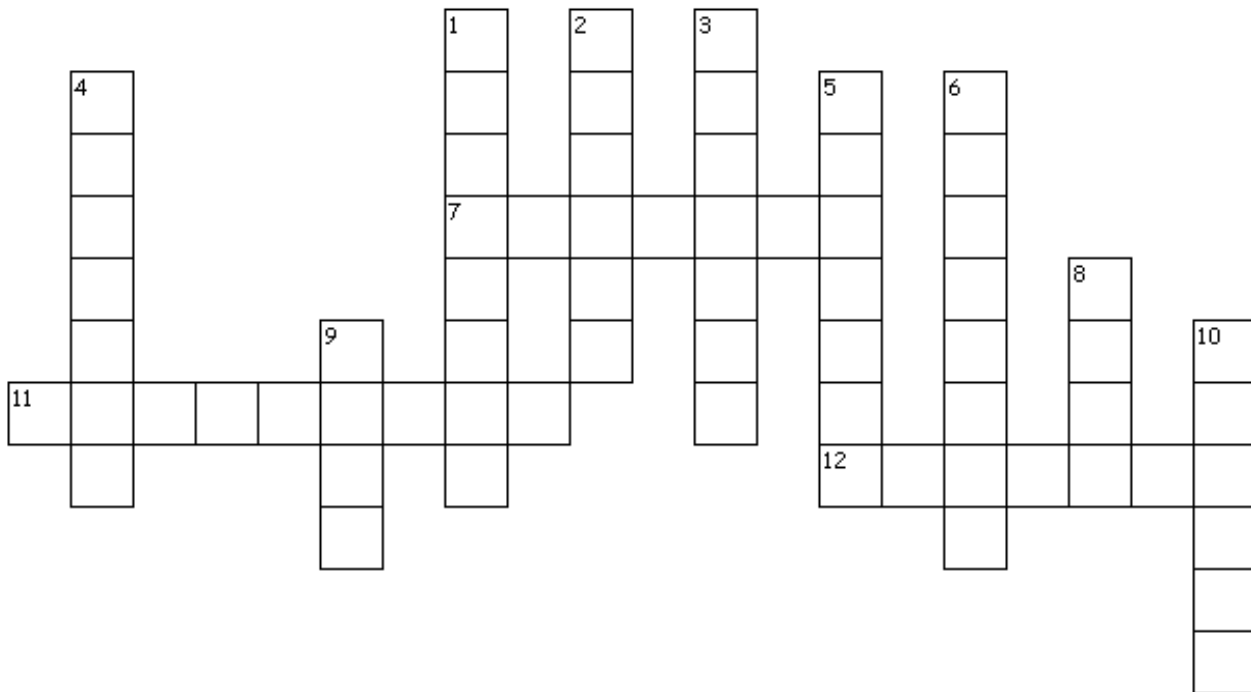
Revised procedure for new centre applications: Applications from new centres wishing to run UK GMDSS courses will follow the procedure in the updated AMERC Examination Administration Handbook – which includes a preliminary visit from the Chief Examiner before approvals may be granted. This visit will be at the expense of the centre making the application.

ECC & AEV contracts/notice of AGM: Examination Coordination Centre and Approved Examination Venue contracts; and notice of AGM 2014 - will be issued by the Secretary in the near future.

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1 July 2013 – 27 September 2013** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 st time)	PASSED (1 st attempt)	% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT
UK GOC	213 (171)	164 (128)	128/171 (>74%)
ALL GOC	506 (427)	414 (347)	347/427 (>81%)
UK ROC	41 (38)	38 (35)	35/38 (>92%)
ALL ROC	49 (46)	46 (43)	43/46 (>93%)
LRC	16 (16)	16 (16)	16/16 (100%)

GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 48 - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS, *where appropriate*



Down

1. Belgian **port** where 7-across meets the North Sea.
2. Turkish **port** at the Mediterranean end of the Baku-Tblisi(?) oil pipeline.
3. **VHF/MF/HF DSC control station** at northern end of Taiwan (3-4).
4. Nearest **NAVTEX** station to 11-across.
5. **VHF/MF/HF RT Station**; and Northern Syrian **port** earmarked for shipping-out chemical weapon material.
6. Republic and **hub-port** for the Red Sea and Indian Ocean - historically part of the 'Land of Punt'
8. International **NAV/METAREA** covering 6-down
9. **ID letter** for English language **NAVTEX** service from 10-down
10. **Island** to the WSW of 5-down.

Across

7. **River** on which 12-across is situated.
11. Southern Taiwan **port city** hosting its first-ever boat show in 2014.
12. Belgium's main **port**.

Issue 47 answers – with hyperlinks:

DOWN: 1. [Matola](#); 2. [Koper](#); 3. [Esbjerg](#); 4. [Vung Tao](#); 6. [Chennai](#); 8. [Maputo](#); 10. [Izmir](#).

ACROSS: 5. [Canada](#); 6. [Cartagena](#); 7. [Baltimore](#); 9. [Kaliningrad](#); 11. [Mayote](#).

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 exchanges below follow previous coverage of EPIRB False Alert (cancellation) procedures; and DSC Test Calls.

Question: Following your publishing of the latest issue of AMERC News – a further question on EPIRB false distress alert cancellation. I note you have repeated the new procedure for this and which you first included in AMERC News last February. In both cases, you quote the "appropriate MRCC" as part of the procedure. Do you have the definition of the "appropriate" MRCC? The use of the word "appropriate" seems to suggest that the MRCC which received the false alert is known. This cannot be the case as operators on board ships can have no idea which LUT (and therefore MRCC) actually received the false alert. Previously, we have taught that a ship's operator may use any MRCC to cancel the false alert.

Answer: Current IMO 'GUIDELINES FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF FALSE DISTRESS ALERTS' state '***If for any reason an EPIRB is activated accidentally, the ship should contact the nearest coast station or an appropriate coast earth station or RCC and cancel the distress alert***' and further states '***Notwithstanding the above, ships may use any means available to them to inform the appropriate authorities that a false distress alert has been transmitted and should be cancelled***' - so: yes, the nearest Coast Station/RCC will be capable and happy to deal with your message – presumably by relaying it to the 'appropriate' MRCC. ☺

Feedback: Regarding your Q&A about DSC test calls – I [a retired Radio Ship Inspector] thought that the answer you supplied to the guy who contacted you about his unfortunate experience with PSC surveyors was very good. The surveyor at the time was correct in stating the requirement was to test weekly with a shore station. However, ship to ship testing was always acceptable (as an alternative arrangement only) when there was no opportunity to test with a shore station.

If you do contact that officer again, there is another very good HF DSC station out in the Pacific which could have been included among your suggestions. Hong Kong Marine Rescue (004773500) always gave me excellent results whenever I was surveying new UK ships in Japanese shipyards. He keeps watch on 4 6 8 12 and 16 MHz H24 and always replied within seconds. **[Editor's note - following a 'heads-up' from Simon Boyde of Storm Force Marine Ltd in Wanchai, Hong Kong, I contacted Hong Kong Marine Rescue and was informed that 'HKMRCC is dedicated to Search and Rescue operation only. No test call will be entertained' – my apologies for not confirming this before first publishing]**

Further feedback: Re the DSC test calls - we [ALRS Editors] only list those stations which have indicated that they are prepared to offer test call facilities - Mauritius being one offering test calls on all HF DSC frequencies 4 - 16 MHz which could be a very useful one to advertise. I will send off a few emails to see if we can gather more DSC Test Call info and I'll copy you in on any interesting replies!

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