



Editorial

Welcome to issue 51 of AMERC News - which doubles as **Circular 266** and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors/examiners by their AMERC centre contact.

In this issue we have 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: a reminder that **Course Completion Certificate records** must be retained for 5 years; clarification on the use of **touch-screen simulation** in lieu of hard-panel/live equipment; further clarification of the **GMDSS Handheld VHF Radio** for training and examination purposes; information on **a suspension on new overseas applications** from those wishing to run UK GMDSS courses; advance notice of location and dates for the **2015 Annual General Meeting**; information about the **new AMERC Website** format; and the latest **quarterly examination statistics** from the National Administration Centre (NAC).

Explanation Please? (Page 3) Has a question on how to conduct a **battery 'load test'** with equipment that does not allow selection of H3E on working frequencies; another on **Maritime Mobile Service Identities** (MMSIs); and one on the use of **Automatic Acknowledgement** for various categories of DSC alert/call.

We have another '**GMDSS Criss-Crossword**' (Page 4) to help stretch candidates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty List of Radio Signals (ALRS)** publications. The answers to puzzle 50 are also included – **again with hyperlinks** for those interested in learning more about the featured locations/stations.

Tales from the Key-Side has two stories from Keith Watkins of STC – one from his seagoing days, and one from the classroom. Keith tells me he is happy to be named, rather than remain anonymous - despite the prospect of possibly leaving himself open to some form of retribution!

Maritime Miscellaneous is replaced by an obituary for Ted Hackett, kindly provided by Roger Johnson.

Your submissions will be welcome for **Member Profile** and **Tales from the Key-Side** - and/or anything else you think would be of interest to readers. Further suggestions to help students with their knowledge of international geography – a continuing issue – will also be welcome!

As usual – my sincere thanks to those of you who've provided feedback, questions and other information for your newsletter.

Sláinte!

Ian W

Mail: gmdss4all@gmail.com

Please note my new email address, above. I've managed to migrate all my contacts from BT Mail to Gmail, but am still working on migrating my message folders. If anyone is missing a reply on any subject – get in touch!

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; the NAC and other AMERC/industry specialists.

The latest meeting was held in Kendal, in September 2014. 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.

Course Completion Certificates - retention:

A reminder that the current AMERC/MCA contract requires that a record of Course Completion Certificates (CCCs) issued by individual centres must be securely retained by that centre for a period of five (5) years. This may be done by recording certificate numbers against individual candidates’ details; or by photo-copying the original CCC.

GMDSS Simulation – Exam requirement:

Where ‘touch-screen’ simulation is used in lieu of individual items of live equipment, or ‘hard-panel’ installation, a separate screen must be used for each piece of equipment being simulated e.g. separate screens for VHF DSC Radio; MF/HF DSC Radio; NAVTEX receiver; Inmarsat-C; Inmarsat B/F77; and Power Supplies/Battery Charger (for ‘load-test’ demonstration/explanation). ‘Toggling’ between equipment screens is not acceptable.

GMDSS Handheld VHF Radio: The equipment fit requirement for a GMDSS Handheld VHF Radio – live or ‘demo’ model - includes a separate ‘emergency’ battery (which can also be a ‘dummy/demonstration’ model) - with contacts sealed, or within a sealed plastic bag – in both cases with battery expiry date visible.

GMDSS LRC/ROC Examination Fees – Overseas Centres:

A reminder from NAC that the ROC/LRC examination fee to be sent, to the NAC, from Overseas Centres, is £100 (not the £140 due from UK Centres).

New Series Examination Papers:

The 2015-16 series examination papers are well on the way to finalisation. The intention is to have those new papers published within the secure area of the AMERC website, alongside the current series papers, in enough time for centres to gain access prior to the implementation date of 1 January 2015.

New Overseas Centre Applications:

The Executive Committee has suspended, until further notice, applications from new Overseas Centres wishing to deliver UK GMDSS training and examinations. AMERC Membership applications will continue to be considered and presented to current full members for acceptance, or otherwise, at Annual General Meeting.

Annual General Meeting 2015:

The 2015 AGM is likely to be held in either Liverpool or Manchester, at a venue to be decided. AGM itself is due to start on Wednesday 10th June at 1530; followed by the AGM Dinner in the evening; and Examiner’s Panel at 0930 Thursday 11th. There being no ‘new papers’ issue the Examiner’s Panel is not expected to take more than one hour, at which point delegates can leave for home (or enjoy an extended stay?). The normal notice of AGM will confirm full details.

New AMERC Website:

Feedback on the new website – using the link provided therein – is welcome from all users/readers.

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1 April 2014 – 27 June 2014** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 st time)	PASSED (1 st attempt)	% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT
UK GOC	291 (253)	248 (219)	219/253 (>86%)
ALL GOC	675 (593)	583 (511)	511/593 (>86%)
UK ROC	79 (63)	63 (52)	52/63 (>82%)
ALL ROC	90 (74)	74 (63)	63/74 (>85%)
LRC	44 (44)	43 (43)	43/44 (>97%)

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 include questions on conducting the 'load test' on the radio battery installation; one on identifying the source of a transmission based on its MMSI; and one on the use of Auto-Ack for various categories of DSC Alert/Call.

Question: To do a battery load-test, we previously used the MF/HF SSB radio on full power, with H3E selected (to draw maximum current and hence heaviest 'load'). Our new SSB radio does not allow H3E selection on any marine voice frequency. How best to 'load' the batteries with this new equipment?

Answer: The Chief Examiner did some experimenting recently and found that a sustained (about 10 second) loud whistle directly into the microphone did generate a decent load, achieving the desired result for this test.

Question: The subject of MMSIs is getting somewhat involved – could you give a brief explanation please, with examples, of MMSI-types that may be allocated for different purposes - also – who allocates 'group' MMSIs – as I see that we can apparently insert one of our own choice in our current DSC equipment?

Answer: The AMERC Quiz contains questions covering different types of MMSI. In addition to ship, group, and Coast Station MMSIs, the quiz now includes questions covering those for AIS SART, Aids to Navigation, and SAR Aircraft. Briefly: typical examples could be summarised as being:

Ship MMSIs will start with a whole number from 2-7 inclusive - e.g. 232433000;
Group MMSIs start with a single leading zero - e.g. 023243300;
Coast Station MMSI always start with double-zero – e.g. 002320010;
AIS SARTs will start with figures 970 e.g. 970221234; MOB Devices - 971221234; EPIRB-AIS -974221234;
'Daughter-craft' Class-B AIS transponders will normally start with 98 – e.g. 982320001;
Aids to Navigation (ATN) will be in the form 99MIDxxxx – e.g. 992321010 (where 232 is a UK country MID) - and where the sixth digit could be either 1 (for a physical ATN); or 6 (for a virtual ATN); and
SAR Aircraft will start with triple-one e.g. 111232001.

There are further sub-divisions, for some categories, depending on the fifth/sixth digit.

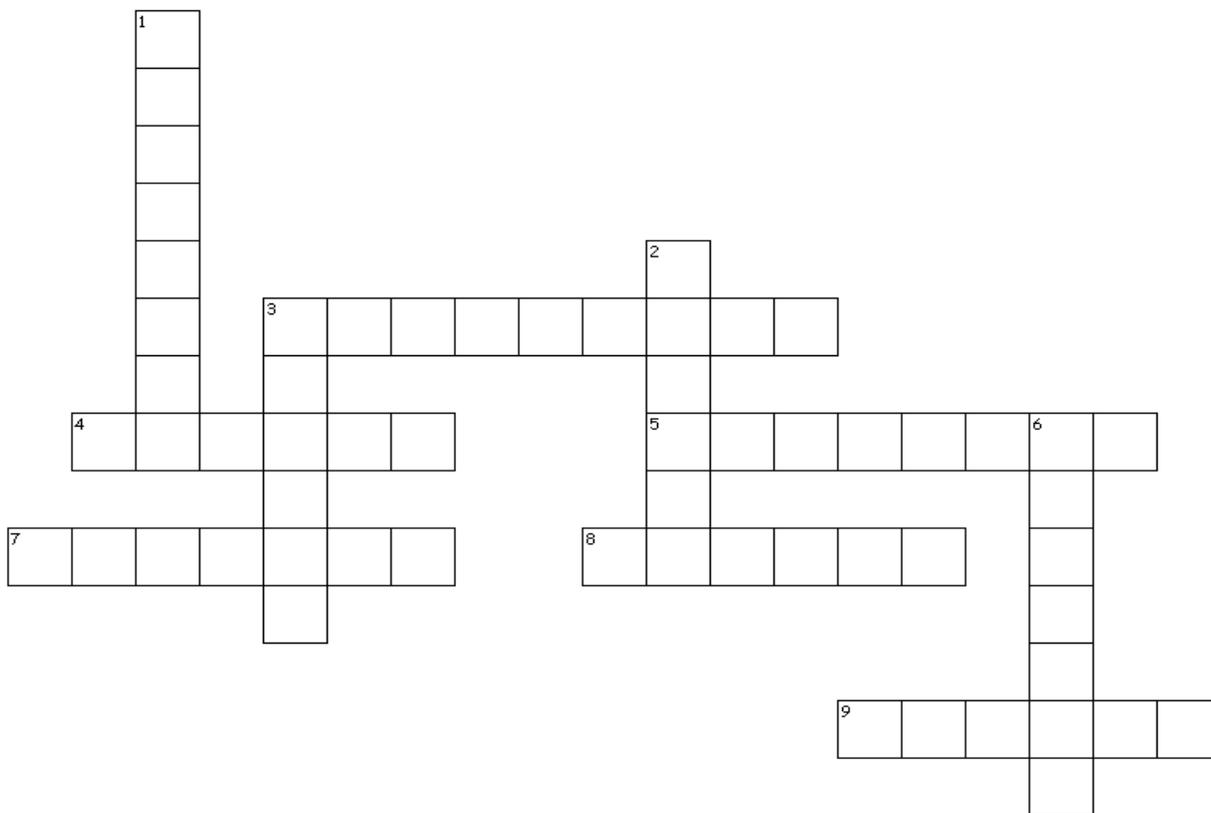
To decide a group MMSI for your 'fleet', or other group of vessels (e.g. a temporary event like a particular yacht race) – you would typically select an MMSI from the 'fleet' which has a 'trailing zero'; delete the final zero; and put a leading zero onto the chosen (now only 8-digit) MMSI (as I've done with the 'ship/group' MMSI examples, above).

Question: I am a former R/O from the Morse age who is interested in the GMDSS - and I have a question. I learned from AMERC News November '13 that some DSC coast stations are fitted for automatic test-call acknowledgment. Can we find an Auto-Ack option for ship's DSC equipment, or is it prohibited?

Answer: If your DSC unit has a facility for Auto-Ack of Distress Alerts - this should be disabled; whereas the Auto-Ack for Routine calls is something you might want to enable - though sending an Auto-Ack to a routine call does give the other guy the idea that you are ready to talk on the voice channel. The Test Call, being a Safety priority and intended primarily for ship-shore testing, would not normally have Auto-Ack included in ship's equipment - but worth going through your own equipment menu system to see what it offers?

.o000o.

GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 51 - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS, *where appropriate*



Down

1. NAVAREA serving (4-across)
2. NAVAREA serving (9-across)
3. Nearest NAVTEX station to (9-across)
6. Sea to the north of (8-across)

Across

3. River on which (9-across) is situated
4. Port town and capital of Chukotka, at the mouth of the river bearing the same name
5. St - large island between Alaska and (4-across)
7. Coldest month at (4-across) with average temperatures of -22.6 degrees C.
8. Sea - into which the river named at (4-across) flows
9. Port city and largest community in western Alaska; sister city to (4-across)

Issue 50 answers – with hyperlinks:

DOWN: 1. [Shanghai](#); 2. [Papa](#); 3. [Ningbo](#); 5. [Cambria](#); 7. [Hangzhou](#); 8. [Italy](#)

ACROSS: 4. [Taipei](#); 6. [Fuzhou](#); 7. [Helsinki](#); 9. [Undva](#); 10. [Tallinn](#); 11. [Newport](#).

Tales from the Key-Side - by AnonyMouse ...

This is the page for your stories – whether from personal experience at sea, at work, in the classroom or life generally – recent past or distant past. Or it may be something you've heard. Doesn't matter – we're looking for interesting, funny or informative stories that may make us laugh, cry or look for someone to hit. Submissions may be edited, and the writer's name will, of course, be withheld on request.

Dateline: Radio Room - [SA Oranje/ZSNF](#) – April 1971
Time: Afternoon Watch
Frequency: Outer office – passenger telegram reception area.

I was in the middle of my 12-4 watch in the radio room of above ship. Radio traffic had been heavy during my first 2 hours and I was about to keep an important [Union Castle](#) intership schedule where yet more traffic was expected. A few minutes before commencement, [Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone](#) (who was the Queen's aunt) appeared, accompanied by her lady-in-waiting. I could not afford to miss the company schedule so a bit of quick thinking was required. I explained the situation - and rang for assistance.

Unfortunately, when the Chief Radio Officer appeared in the radio room a few minutes later, he was decidedly the worst for wear - having "supped majestically" down at the [Tourist Class lido bar](#). To say he was paralytic was an understatement - he could hardly stand up. I saw what was going to happen and hid myself away at the operating position and clamped the headphones over my ears.

That did not prevent me from overhearing what was going on behind me (we ROs being able to take Morse rattling away at 20+ wpm and listen to another conversation at the same time). Well - the Chief RO was known throughout the fleet as becoming somewhat argumentative when he had had a few (not to mention a great few).

It soon became apparent that there was something wrong with the message the princess wanted to send, and the Chief would not accept it. The message had been addressed "The Queen, Buckingham Palace" and he objected to this. He argued that all radiotelegrams must include the telegraphic office of destination in the address and, therefore, the message should be addressed to "The Queen, Buckingham Palace, London". The old lady was not having any of that and continued to hold her ground while the Chief continued to argue with her. Eventually, she said to him "Young Man (he liked that bit). Young Man - I will have you know that Buckingham Palace IS a registered telegraphic office and, therefore, the address as it stands is complete."

The message was dumped on my desk to be sent at the first opportunity. The word "London" had been unceremoniously crossed out and I sent it to Portishead with the address "The Queen Buckingham Palace". The Princess had beaten him hands down on that one.

With that, the Chief departed the radio room with his tail between his legs, (no doubt to have yet another stiff whisky or three) - somewhat chastened by the whole incident, news of which soon found its way to my fellow officers who took great delight in rubbing it in. It took him some time to live that one down.

.o000o.

Crossing the Bar – Ted Hackett

Edward “Ted” Hackett.

9th April 1946 – 17th January 2014.

Many members will remember Ted as the GMDSS co-ordinator at Blackpool and Fylde College (previously Fleetwood Nautical College) and as the GMDSS Deputy Chief Examiner. His last AMERC event was the Centenary celebration in Edinburgh. Sadly Ed passed away on 17th January this year following a five year battle with cancer.

Ted started his seagoing career working on deck but he stated that he looked around to see who had the best job at sea and it was clearly the radio officer. He studied at the college in Manchester and obtained a 1st Class PMG. He returned to sea, in his new found role, and worked for the RFA.

He came ashore and worked at Fleetwood Nautical College training future radio officers and latterly GMDSS operators. He continued with the later, on a part time basis, whilst in recovery from his illness.

Ted was a larger than life character who outside his professional life was a keen bridge player, Governor at the local school, Justice of the Peace and even found time to study for a History of Art degree.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara, three children and four grand children.

Further references to Ted can be found at:

<http://www.fleetwoodnauticalcollege.org.uk/page3.html>

<http://www.fleetwoodnauticalcollege.org.uk/page5.html>

You'll need to move down to the colourful photo's of this second page to find reference to Ted – which those who knew him in life will understand!

.o00Oo.