



Editorial

Welcome to issue 53 of AMERC News - *which doubles as Circular 269 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: details of an **Inmarsat presentation** that will be repeated at AGM - giving an update on Inmarsat services, including future delivery of MSI; rejection of a request to introduce a **ROC-to-GOC Conversion course**; rejection of a request by a peripatetic training provider to conduct training and exams using **vessel's own radio equipment**; revised requirement for the use of **Hard-panel and touch-screen simulation** for centres using TRANSAS 4000 series simulators; and an update on the **Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB)** deliberations on future delivery of ROC and GOC training – including a review of limitations on delegate numbers.

The **quarterly statistics for GMDSS examinations** from the NAC are also included here.

Explanation Please? (Page 3) Has questions on the use of **Urgency 'Call and Message'** when using Fleet 77 voice; is **Fleet Broadband** a part of the GMDSS? And the **use of Vessel ID's 'times three'** when sending a voice Acknowledgement to a Distress message.

We have another '**GMDSS Criss-Crossword**' (Page 4) to help stretch delegates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty List of Radio Signals** (ALRS) publications. The answers to puzzle 52 are also included – **again with hyperlinks** for those interested in learning more about the featured locations/stations.

Tales from the Key-Side (page 5) has an 'examination hiccup' story from Aberdeen College (with thanks to Michael Moir). **Member Profile(s)** and **Maritime Miscellaneous** are again 'resting' for this issue, in the absence of any submissions from Members or other readers.

Your submissions will be welcome for **Explanation Please?**, **Member Profile**, **Maritime Misc'** and **Tales from the Key-Side** - and/or anything else you think would be of interest to readers. Further suggestions to help delegates 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!

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AGM 2015

A reminder to anyone who hasn't already made their travel arrangements – AGM 2015 will be held on Wednesday 10th June at 15.30; Examiner's Panel on Thursday 11th at 09.30.

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 London, in March 2015. 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.

Inmarsat Presentation: The Group received a very interesting presentation from John Dodd of Inmarsat on the future of Inmarsat services, with the emphasis on how delivery of Maritime Safety Information and Distress and Safety services are being developed. John will be attending AGM and will further present this information to the assembled group at that time.

ROC-GOC Conversion Course: A suggestion that a (40-hour) ROC-to-GOC Conversion Course be introduced was, after brief discussion, rejected. This does not affect those centres already authorised to run the (shortened) LRC-to-GOC conversion course.

Peripatetic training on-board British-registered vessels: A request by a peripatetic training provider to use a vessel’s own radio equipment when conducting training on-board suitably-equipped vessels, supplemented where necessary with additional peripatetic equipment to ensure a ‘full examination’ fit, (e.g. dummy EPIRBs/SARTs; and ‘voice network’ for the RT exercise), was rejected.

Examination Requirements – hard panels and touch-screen: Centres fitted with TRANSAS 4000 series simulator with ‘hard panel’ for VHF and SSB radio; Inmarsat-C front-panel; and 24Volt meter - should normally use the associated PC as the Inmarsat-C installation. Separate PCs must be used for NAVTEX and Fleet 77 (i.e. no – ‘toggling’ between kit on one PC - one PC is required for each ‘unit’) – and those additional PCs must now be touch-screen enabled. If the simulator is also used for the ‘load test’ demo, a dedicated ‘switchboard’ (touch-screen) monitor will also be needed - to show the switching-off of the battery charger/breaker.

Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) – GOC and ROC course update:

Phil Davies has been continuing his work with the MNTB to finalise updated requirements for delivery of GOC and ROC courses and examinations - which now includes a review of limitations on student numbers, in the light of the availability of simulation (in particular the availability of ‘tutor’ packs). More information will (hopefully) be available to Examiner’s Panel in June.

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1 October 2014 – 31 December 2014** are shown below:

| EXAMINATION | ENTERED (1 st time) | | PASSED (1 st attempt) | | % PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|
| UK GOC | 334 | (290) | 290 | (253) | 253/290 (>87%) |
| ALL GOC | 652 | (564) | 565 | (490) | 490/564 (>86%) |
| UK ROC | 57 | (55) | 55 | (53) | 53/55 (>96%) |
| ALL ROC | 65 | (63) | 63 | (61) | 61/63 (>96%) |
| LRC | 53 | (50) | 49 | (46) | 46/50 (=92%) |

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. *Note that those of you who have access to our EXAMINER'S FORUM' on the AMERC website can open-up and discuss any subject/question that they have an issue with 😊*

The exchanges below include a question on Fleet 77 voice procedures for 'Pan Pan' calls and messages; is 'Fleet Broadband' part of the GMDSS?; and the use of vessel names/ID x3 or x1?

Question: One of the questions in the current examination series asks for an Urgency 'Call and Message' when using Fleet 77 voice. In past papers where we had a similar question (albeit for distress communications) - we were only asked to state the 'message'. Can you explain the reason for the change?

Answer: Radio Regulations only give two procedures for Urgency messages – one for 'text' (as previously used on Telex Over Radio) and one for 'RT' (voice). We have migrated the TOR text procedure directly onto Inmarsat-C, Inmarsat-B telex - and previously onto Inmarsat-A telex; and are using the published 'voice' procedure as the accepted answer for Fleet 77 voice, in the new examination series.

This topic has been opened onto the Examiner's Forum for discussion – all AMERC examiners have access to the forum and your input is sought prior to any further discussion at Examiner's Panel in June.

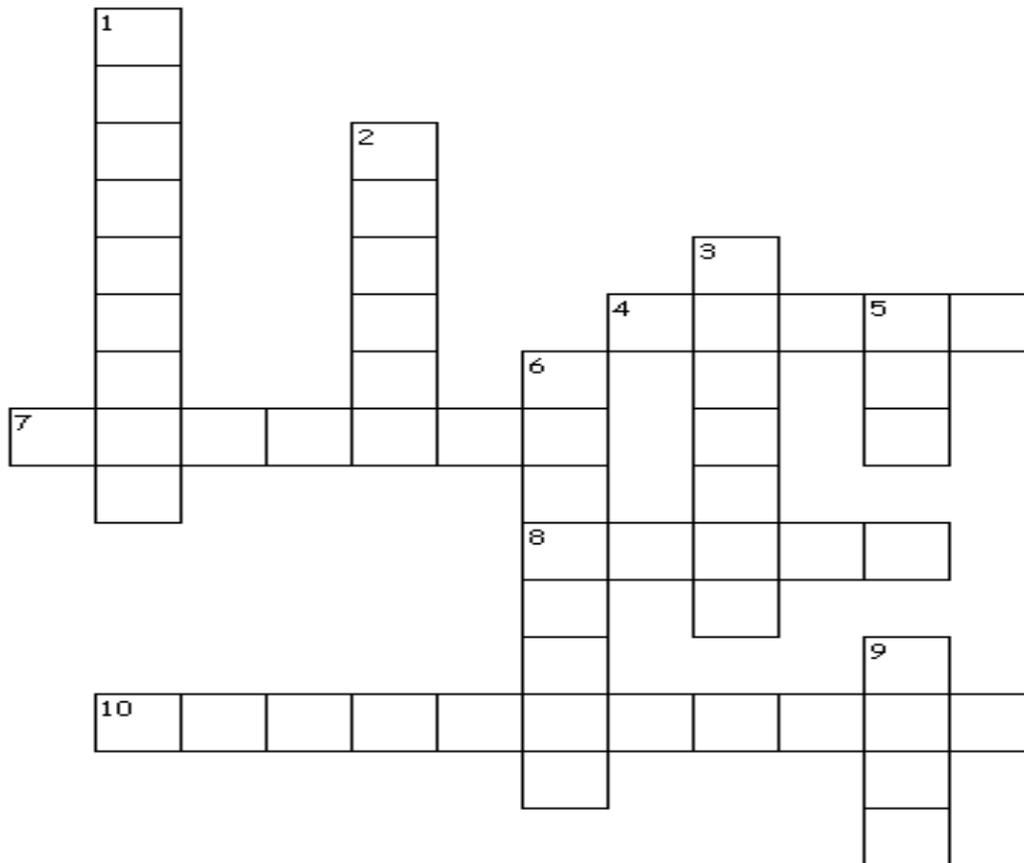
Question: In the (online) [AMERC GMDSS Quiz](#) there's a question about distress calls on Fleet Broadband – is FBB now a part of the GMDSS?

Answer: FBB (and indeed Fleet 77) equipment can currently only be included as part of the 'GMDSS-fit' by 'Flag State exemption' – but we do include questions on such GMDSS-related items in the 'Quiz'

Question: I see in some examination material that the voice Acknowledgement to a Distress message is now shown as '*Mayday - Casualty ID this is Responding Station ID – Received Mayday*'. In past papers we were expected to use Casualty ID and Own ID three times. Why the change?

Answer: Current RRs only require IDs x1 for the distress ACK – though other parts of the RRs do state that Vessel ID's should be used 'maximum of x3' – so either approach would be correct. The RRs *DO* still require Casualty Name x3 for the voice Distress Call.

GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 53 - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS, *where appropriate*



Down

1. World's 6th largest country by area.
2. Nearest HF DSC Station to (10-across).
3. Forecast area for (10-across).
5. NAVAREA/METAREA serving (10-across).
6. Location of 'RCC Australia'.
9. Coastal Warning Area (phoneticised) for (10-across).

Across

4. Inmarsat LES providing Fleet 77 service on (1-down).
7. Australian ports authority that resulted from the 2014 amalgamation of Port Hedland and Dampier Port Authorities.
8. Inmarsat LES that broadcasts SafetyNET and Coastal Warning information for (5-down).
10. Australian port that serves the Sino Iron Project (4,7).

Issue 52 answers – with hyperlinks:

DOWN: 2. [Sulu Sea](#) 3. [Grangemouth](#); 5. [Philippines](#); 6. [Forth](#); 8. [Manila](#).

ACROSS: 1. [Netherlands](#); 4. [Legazpi](#); 7. [Humber](#); 9. [Aberdeen](#); 10. [Cullercoats](#).

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: Aberdeen College – 8th floor (penthouse suite/radio room) - c. 2008
Time: GOC log-keeping examination
Frequency: As required.

The log-keeping booths comprised of a long desk divided into eight 'booths' by partitions.

When standing the students could see each other but when seated they were isolated by the booth structure. Each booth had its own radio.

Log-keeping exercise had started. I, as examiner, had just sent the 'Distress Alert DSC' and students were busy filling in their logs.

I heard a low, long gasp from the other side of the room a chair scrape against the floor and a hand thump down on the dividing partitions.

A slow groan followed as a thin grizzled old Danish captain dragged himself to his feet, peered over the partition, looked me straight in the eye and said in a laboured voice 'I think I have a problem'

Fearing the worst I was torn between reaching for the 'phone on the wall to call for medical assistance; or catching the suspected heart attack victim before he crashed to the floor.

I chose the latter and rushed round the table to his aid, whereupon he held up his pen and exclaimed

'I seem to have run out of ink'

Nowadays I insist that all students confirm they have at least two working pens for all exams!

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