



Editorial

Welcome to issue 56 of AMERC News - which doubles as **Circular 273** 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 most recent AMERC Executive Committee (EC) meeting - including: a reminder that Members should have received their **Notice of AGM and Examiners Panel meeting**; and a reference to the **Next Examination Series**, - including a pointer to the Examiners Forum on the AMERC website, where a suggestion to change the marking systems for General Knowledge papers has been posted.

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

Explanation Please? (Page 3) Has clarification on the impression that a recent Merchant Shipping Notice (MSN) appeared to suggest that all bridge watch-keepers beyond Sea Area A1 might be required to hold a GOC (and the implications for revalidation of Deck Certificates that that might cause). There is also input from a correspondent regarding the use of the words 'Callsign' 'MMSI' and 'Position' in radiotelephony calls and messages.

Page 6 hosts another '**GMDSS Criss-Crossword**' to help stretch delegates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty List of Radio Signals** (ALRS) publications. The answers to puzzle 55 are also included – **again with hyperlinks** for those interested in learning more about the featured locations/stations.

We have two contributions (Page 7) to **Tales from the Key-Side** – both from personal experience of contributors, rather than from classroom or seagoing experience.

There's no **Member Profile(s)** feature in this issue; but **Maritime Miscellaneous** is here with a circular from the IMO regarding the release of the GMDSS Manual (2015 Edition)

Your submissions are always 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 would also be welcome.

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

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; the NAC and other AMERC/industry specialists.

The latest meeting was held in London in December 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.

Notice of AGM: Member representatives should have received Circular 272 – Notice of AGM – from the Secretary. The location is to be Southampton – the actual venue will be notified directly to Members by the AGM co-ordinator, in due course. Trainers and Examiners attached to all Member organisations should raise any points they wish to make, or questions they wish to ask (either of AGM or of Examiners’ Panel), with their attending representative – who can submit items for either (AGM/Examiners Panel) agenda in advance.

Examination Papers update: The papers for the upcoming examination series (2017-18) are being reviewed and only minor changes are anticipated for the next series - due for implementation January 2017. The moderation panel will meet in March 2016 to finalise changes and the new series will be presented to Examiners’ Panel in June, as happened with the current series. Meanwhile – a suggestion to change the marking scheme for General Knowledge papers has been received – that suggestion is now on the Examiners Forum on the AMERC website – comments welcome!

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1st July 2015 – 25th September 2015** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 st time)		PASSED (1 st attempt)		% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT
UK GOC	258	(220)	219	(187)	187/220 (=85%)
ALL GOC	501	(425)	423	(359)	359/425 (>84%)
UK ROC	51	(48)	46	(43)	43/48 (>89%)
ALL ROC	54	(51)	46	(46)	46/51 (>90%)
LRC	19	(19)	19	(19)	19/19 (100%)



Time for a clean-up?
Effect of smoke on the upperworks/antennas.



‘Frog transfer’ in the Caspian Sea.
[waiting my turn – pleased that it was not too windy!]

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 J*

Question: in a recent AMERC News you referred to MSN 1864 (M) and suggested that the wording could be taken to imply that anyone keeping a bridge watch outside of Sea Area A1 might now have to hold a GOC; whereas the notice that MSN 1864 (M) replaced only required a ROC. Could you check and confirm how/whether this might affect people applying for a **revalidation** of their Deck Certificate – but who might only have a ROC?

Answer (from our main contact in the MCA):

Good morning Ian.

Anybody operating a radio must be properly qualified with respect to the equipment on board.

It has been our policy for many years that all **new** deck officer CoC holders must also hold a GMDSS GOC. Even Near-Coastal certificate holders require a GOC as these go out to 150 miles.

However, (always a however) we understand that the Radio Reg's only require the person in charge of the station to hold a GOC, with the other operators working under supervision. Thus the MCA is effectively gold plating the regulations, but has done so for a long time and with a number of public consultations in between times and there have never been any objections.

Because of this we do not require those revalidating a CoC but holding only an ROC to upgrade their GMDSS certification. However, these people cannot be in charge of the radio station etc.

Input: (from [Laszlo Mercz/Mercator Publishing](#) – regarding a 'handout' he has prepared for his delegates on GMDSS courses – in answer to questions he's received from delegates):

The appropriate use of procedural words "Call sign" "MMSI" and "Position"

The use of words like "Call sign", "MMSI" and "Position" before the actual value gives the meaning of the values, so examples of the correct use is as follows:

Mayday. Magellan, **Call sign** Delta Foxtrot 5 4 3 9, **MMSI** 2 1 1 3 4 8 7 3 0.

Position 48 degrees 53 002 minutes North, 002 degrees 17 minutes West.

Using these terms the listener knows what kind of information to be expected.

Not using these procedural words would make the message much less meaningful and could lead to misunderstanding and error e.g.

Mayday Magellan Delta Foxtrot 5 4 3 9 2 1 1 3 4 8 7 3 0

4 8 degrees 5 3 minutes North,

0 0 2 degrees 1 7 minutes West.

Please notice the series of 4 +9 +2 = 15 figures (5 4 3 9 2 1 1 3 4 8 7 3 0 4 8) in the sequence without metadata (the prefix of the underlying definition or description), is confusing.

1. Procedures in the Radio Regulations

Taking the example of the Distress call and message of the ITU Radio Regulations Article 32: **32.13C** § 9B 1) The distress call sent on the frequency 156.8 MHz (VHF channel 16) shall be given in the following form, taking into account Nos. **32.6** and **32.7**:

- the distress signal “MAYDAY”, spoken three times;
- the words “THIS IS”;
- the name of the vessel in distress, spoken three times;
- the call sign or other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial alert has been sent by DSC). (WRC-12)

32.13D 2) The distress message which follows the distress call should be given in the following form, taking into account Nos. **32.6** and **32.7**:

- the distress signal “MAYDAY”;
- the name of the vessel in distress;
- the call sign or other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial alert has been sent by DSC);
- the position, given as the latitude and longitude, or if the latitude and longitude are not known or if time is insufficient, in relation to a known geographical location;
- the nature of the distress;
- the kind of assistance required;
- any other useful information. (WRC-12)

This procedure gives the standard structure of the information to be included, but it is not intended to specify, what is the format and style of the radiotelephony message. You might notice that there is no “Over” mentioned, an invitation to reply to the distress message, but in practice you have to finish the message with the procedural word “Over”.

The text of the Radio Regulations is not a template or example for voice distress messages, rather the definition of its contents. The actual format should take into account human factors to make the message understandable, avoid misunderstanding and error. Many considerations, like the necessity of recognizing the ‘intercultural’ aspects, are discussed at the International Maritime English conferences by the lecturers of maritime English.

2. Best practice in marine radiotelephony

Therefore, we have to learn from the best practice in the marine radio communication world to get a set of guidelines and ideas that represent the most efficient course of action. These are methods or techniques consistently showing results superior to those achieved with other means. Let us see two of the most prominent sources on this issue:

a) Graham D. Lees and W. Williamson : Handbook for Marine Radio Communication (Fifth edition) p. 20-21. Radiotelephony distress call and message (example):

MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY
THIS IS HINDERTON, HINDERTON, HINDERTON - **CALL SIGN** GVKA, **MMSI** 232026000
MAYDAY
HINDERTON - **CALL SIGN** GVKA, **MMSI** 232026000
56° 21' NORTH 08° 34 WEST
ON FIRE AND DRIFTING
REQUIRE IMMEDIATE ASSISTENCE
WIND NOTHWESTERLY FORCE SIX
OVER

b) Ian Waugh: The Mariner’s Guide to Marine Communications (Second edition)

published by The Nautical Institute. p.71. Ch16 Voice Distress Procedures – Sea Area A1
example:

Mayday Mayday Mayday
this is Motor Vessel *Justina, Justina, Justina*
Mayday
Justina
callsign Golf Juliet Uniform Sierra, **MMSI** 232456789
Position 50 degrees 21 minutes North, 005 degrees 50 minutes West,
Fire in engine room, Require Immediate Assistance, 25 Persons on Board,
Over

In conclusion, in marine radiotelephony distress, urgency and safety communications, the data should be preceded by the term indicating the meaning of the data. Therefore, the examples of my Marine VHF Radio Handbook and the Marine VHF Radio Simulator are consistent with the Radio Regulations and follow the best practice of the maritime Radiocommunication world. Example:

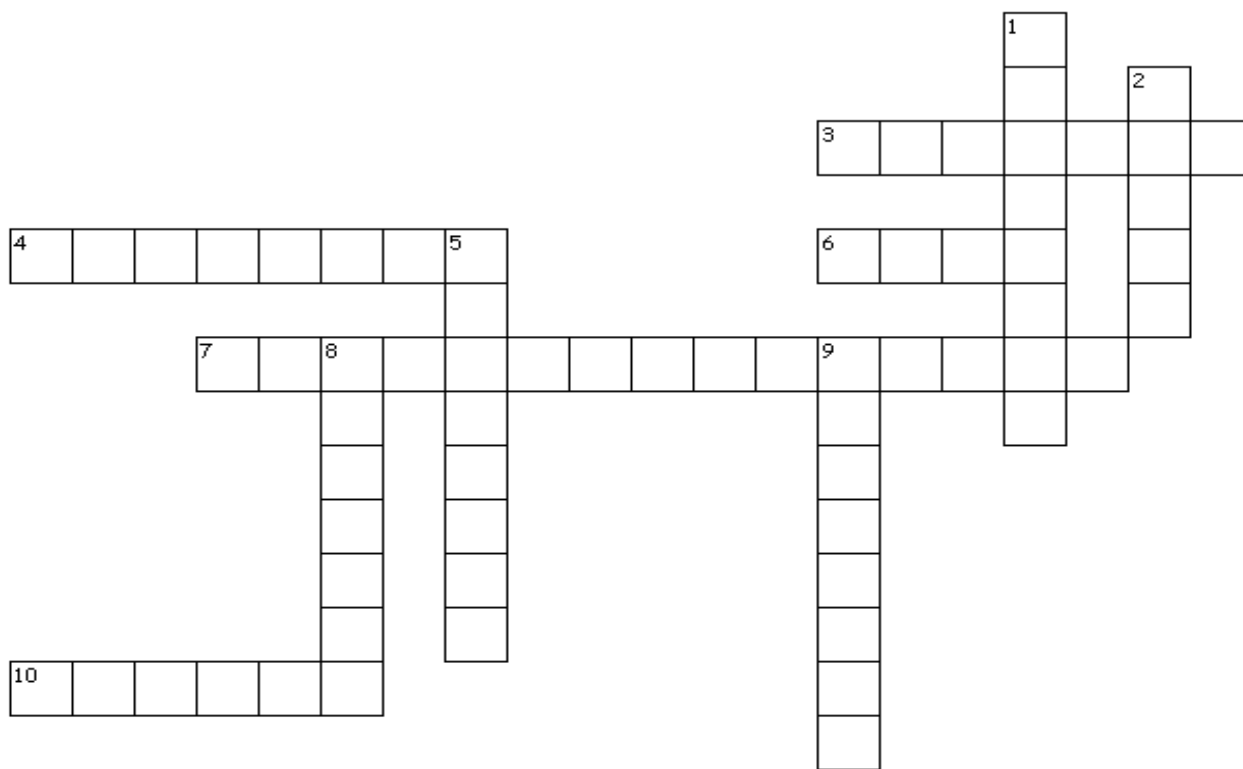
Mayday, Mayday, Mayday.
This is Silver Crest, Silver Crest, Silver Crest,
Call sign Papa Charlie 3 3 4 9, **MMSI** 2 4 4 2 6 0 2 4 6.
Mayday.
Silver Crest, **Call sign** Papa Charlie 3 3 4 9, **MMSI** 2 4 4 2 6 0 2 4 6.
Position 4 8 degrees 1 9 minutes North,
0 0 2 degrees 4 3 minutes West.
We must abandon yacht after explosion. We require immediate assistance.
We are launching liferaft now. Total number of persons is 7.
We have handheld VHF and SART activated.
Over.

I hope those examples help to clarify some points.

[Ed's note: the procedure shown in example (b) above showing callsign and MMSI in the message but not also in the call – does not match current RRs, where Callsign and MMSI are now required in both call and message (noted that this does not detract from Laslo's point regarding using the words 'callsign' 'MMSI' and 'position' to tell people what's coming next!)]

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GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 56 - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS, *where appropriate*



Down

1. VHF, MF and HF DSC Station close to 7-across
2. NAVTEX station serving 4-across
5. Island nation to the east and south of 7-across
8. Phoneticised ID letter for 2-down
9. Remote receiver site for Canadian HF DSC Station 003160023

Across

3. NAVTEX station on the coast some way north of 7-across
4. Northern Norwegian port close to the land border with Russia
6. Phoneticised ID letter for 3-across
7. Port Trust at the second-largest port in Tamil Nadu/fourth-largest container terminal in India? (1,1,13)
10. Main VHF Working Channel for 4-across

Issue 55 answers – with hyperlinks:

DOWN: 1. [PuertoGalera](#) 2. [BitterLakes](#) (with apologies - clue said 7); 4. [SuezCanal](#); 6. [Juliatt](#)
ACROSS: 3. [Mindoro](#); 5. [Luzon](#); 7. [Xray](#); 8. [Manila](#) 9. [Ismailiya](#); 10. [Timsah](#)

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: Crieff Cemetery, Scotland – August 2015
Time: On the day of my sister's burial
Frequency: Getting a bit *too* frequent ...

I'd walked over to my Mother's grave with our 11-year-old Grandson and saw that my brother had placed fresh flowers there earlier in the day.

Explained the wording on the gravestone to Grandson.

'This was your other Great-Grandmother – my Mother – her name Allison Tarbet Waugh, *née* Campbell – meaning that Campbell was her surname before she married my Dad - and that's where your own middle-name comes from.'

'Oh ... right ... and yours and Uncle Iain's middle-name too?'

'Correct – and you can see that she died in 1996, and you weren't born until 2004 – which is why you never knew her'

'Oh right the flowers have lasted well!'

Dateline: Anglesey, North Wales - September 2015
Time: Shortly after crossing the Menai Strait
Frequency: approximately 17 syllables?



Passenger: Ah - it's that '*Clan-fair-phil-gwyn-gill-goger-ich-rin-drob'll-clanty-silio-go-go-goch*' place.

Driver: That's not how you say it – it's '*Chlan-fair-phil-gingill-goger-ech-rin-drob'll-clanty-silio-go-go-goff*'

The argument continued until they stopped at a fast-food place; ordered lunch; and asked the server: 'Settle an argument please ... what is this place called – and *PLEASE - SPEAK - SLOWLY...*'

Server: '*Burrr ... Gerrr ... King ...*'

.o000o.

Maritime Miscellaneous: From IMO News: ‘We are pleased to inform you that GMDSS Manual, 2015 Edition is now available. This edition renders obsolete the previous 2013 edition.

The GMDSS Manual provides, in a single comprehensive publication, an explanation of the principles upon which the GMDSS is based, the radiocommunication requirements and recommendations for its implementation, the operational performance standards and technical specifications to be met by GMDSS equipment, and the procedures for and method of operation of the various radio services which form the GMDSS and the Master Plan for the GMDSS.

The 2015 edition is fully updated and includes:

- A description of the development and the concepts of the GMDSS
- A description of the components of the GMDSS, the carriage requirements and the operational procedures
- Excerpts from the relevant SOLAS regulations for the GMDSS
- Supporting resolutions and circulars relevant to the GMDSS
- The IMO performance standards and related ITU-R Recommendations giving the technical detail of the radio equipment
- The Joint IMO/IHO/WMO Manual on Maritime Safety Information (2015)
- The NAVTEX Manual (2012)
- The International SafetyNET Manual (2011)
- The current GMDSS Master Plan giving the details of the coastal infrastructure and services provided by member administrations
- Extracts from the ITU-R Radio Regulations giving the radio regulatory background.

The Manual is intended for use by ship personnel, shore operators, trainers, administrations, regulators and anyone else concerned with ship communication’



The ever-popular ‘Fish and Chips’ barca in Viareggio – the ‘Fritto Misto’ is highly recommended!