

AMERC News

Issue 64 – Incorporates Circular 283

January 2018

Editorial

Welcome to issue 64 of AMERC News - *which doubles as **Circular 283** 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) which includes an item on **the wording in Course Completion Certificates (CCCs)** to reflect STCW 1978 as amended, and not STCW '95; an update of the production of **Examination papers for the upcoming 2019-2020** series; the availability of the (online) **ITU MARS database** in lieu of paper/disk versions of the ITU List of Ship Stations and MMSI Assignments; and some pointers from recent **Chief Examiner's audit visits**, that might help other centres come up with a 'clean sheet' when their own inspection comes around..

The latest **quarterly statistics for GMDSS examinations** are also included here.

Page 3 hosts our usual '**GMDSS Criss-Crossword**' to help stretch delegates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty Digital Radio Signals (ADRS)** and **Admiralty List of Radio Signals (ALRS)** publications; and a reminder about the '**Triviaplaza world geography quiz**' identified by Chris Harrison and first introduced in News number 59.

'**Tales from the Key-Side**'(page 4)features an item about (failed) DSC testing during a Ship Radio Inspection; and Page 5 hosts **Explanation Please?**- with a question about UK Coastguard radio callsigns in their new networked 'Sector' arrangement; and one asking 'how many GMDSS operators' must be carried onboard a vessel?

'**Maritime Miscellaneous**'(Page 6) has press release from Cobham about the GMDSS fitting on a Turkish training vessel; and on Page 7 an item on the UK Radio Equipment Directive.

'**Member Profile(s)**'is again missing input from any centre who'd like to tell us all about themselves – item(s) welcome for future editions!

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 develop their knowledge of international geography would also be welcome. When it comes to **Explanation Please?**always remember – if YOU have an issue then someone else probably has that issue too ... **don't be shy!**

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

Sláinte!

Ian W

Mail: gmdss4all@gmail.com

AMERC AGM/Examiners' Panel 2018

Members should have received Circular 282 – the pre-AGM Circular – which was sent out by the Secretary on 23rd January. Any Member/Centre who did not receive this circular should contact the Secretary for a repeat.

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 2017. The following items reflect discussions at MCG (full minutes will be circulated appropriately) - and/or associated items that may be of interest to Members and training centres. The items are placed according to size - not in any ‘priority’ order.

Course Completion Certificates (CCCs) – GOC and ROC: Noted that, during Chief Examiner centres visits, a number of centres have altered their Course Completion Certificates to refer to ‘STCW ‘95’. CCCs should, in fact, refer to ‘*Regulation IV/2, and Section A-IV/2 of the STCW Convention and Code 1978, as amended*’. The Secretary issued a reminder to all centres to alter their CCCs for both GOC and ROC to reflect this change, on December 23rd – with example CCCs attached to his email.

GMDSS Examination – 2019-2020 series papers: The moderation team for UK GMDSS GOC, ROC and LRC examination papers will be meeting in January to finalise the draft papers for the 2019-2020 series examinations. Updates will reflect input from centres during the October 2017 consultation window (and some later input that was considered appropriate to include). As with the current series: wholesale changes to the existing question and answer structure for General Knowledge papers, RT Examination, and Operational Performance Test (OPT) are not envisaged – changes made will reflect thinking on improving, rather than re-inventing, the examination format.

Publications – ITU List of Ship Stations and MMSI Assignments: Noted that, for all publications being used for training and examinations, the AMERC requirement is for publications to be ‘not more than five years old’. In the case of the [ITU List of Ship Stations and MMSI Assignments](#) it was agreed that, if reliable Internet access is available from the ‘digital bookcase’ in the classroom/examination suite, the ITU online [Maritime mobile Access and Retrieval System \(MARS\)](#) can be used for both training and examinations in lieu of paper or ‘disk’ versions - which will both contain more dated information than the online service.

AMERC Chief Examiner visits – items of note: Some items that came up during Chief Examiner visits over the past period, which other centres and examiners might want to review and/or consider ‘fixing’ before their own inspection, included (but are not limited to):

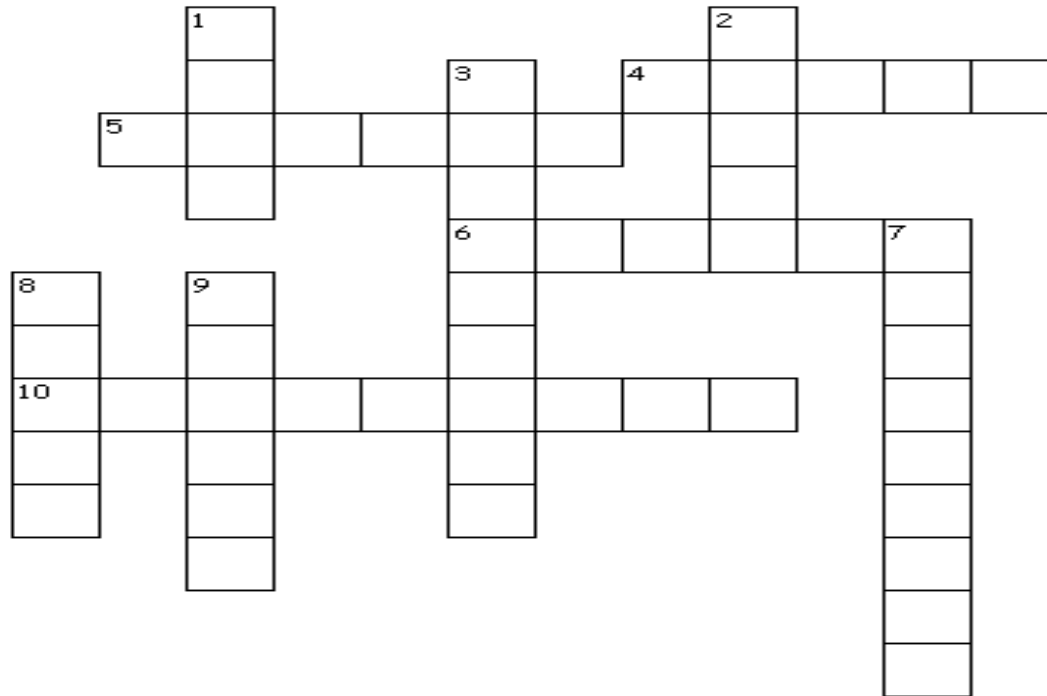
- examiner not explaining the GK multi-choice marking grid – how to mark/change an answer;
- examiner not providing a 5-minute and 2-minute warning of time remaining on the GK paper;
- lack of a suitable ‘live signal’ to demonstrate ‘gain’ and ‘fine tune’ controls on the SSB radio;
- examiner not maintaining the RT log and marking sheet ‘live’ during the verbal part of the exam;
- examiner not accurately recording start/end times for individual OPT examinations; and
- CCCs referring to STCW ‘95 (instead of ‘1978 as amended’).

(and a wee look at your previous report, as a reminder!).

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1st July 2017 – 29th September 2017** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 st time)		PASSED (1 st attempt)		% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT
UK GOC	199	(179)	176	(162)	162/179 (>90%)
ALL GOC	359	(329)	322	(298)	298/329 (>90%)
UK ROC	22	(21)	21	(20)	20/21 (>95%)
ALL ROC	22	(21)	21	(20)	20/21 (>95%)
LRC	30	(27)	23	(23)	23/27 (>85%)

GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 64 - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS/ADRS, *where appropriate*. Readers might also like to test their knowledge of international geography by using the [‘Triviaplaza geography quizzes’](#) website (where you might also find one or more of the answers required below).



Down

- 1. Port on the northern bank of (9-down).
- 2. Authority providing NAV’ warning info for (5-across & 4-across).
- 3. Belgian port connected by ferry to (1-down).
- 7. MMSI for UK CG Operations Centre having the same name as (9-down).
- 8. Authority providing SafetyNET MET information for (5-across & 4-Across).
- 9. River/estuary on which (10-across) situated.

Across

- 4. East Malaysian port state forming part of the north of (6-across).
- 5. SafetyNET NAV/METarea within which (6-across) is situated.
- 6. Largest island in Asia/third largest in the world?
- 10. First UK port to bunker a visiting ship with LNG

Issue 63 answers – with hyperlinks:

DOWN: 1. [Edinburgh](#); 2 [Cullercoats](#); 4. [Mongla](#); 5. [004194404](#); 6. [Haldia](#).

ACROSS: 3. [Chittangong](#); 5. [002320004](#); 7. [Madhumati](#); 8. [Bangladesh](#); 9. [Aberdeen](#) –

and see ADRS1345/ALRS Vol 5 maps!

Tales from the Key-Side –byAnonyMouse ...

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 something to hit. Submissions may be edited, and the writer's name will, of course, be withheld on request.

Dateline: Ship Radio Survey – Northern North Sea (Scotland sector) – c 2010 or thereby
Time: whilst attempting MF DSC Test Call on GMDSS battery supply
Frequency: Annual.

I was conducting a radio survey on a FPSO (Floating Production, Storage and Offloading vessel - which was classed as a ship for Radio Survey purposes).

The survey was going well.

The 220V supply to the GMDSS system (which includes the Battery Charger) was switched off.

MF DSC set up to send a test transmission to Aberdeen Coastguard some 150 miles away.

'Send' button duly pressed, the Transmitter whirled into life but, after about two seconds, the transmitter cut out.

The test DSC had not been sent and the Transmitter had tripped, shutting itself off.

To cut a long story short, two hours later, the Ship's Electrician, Ship's Instrument Technician, and myself finally figured out what was happening. Here are the main results from our fault finding.

1. The MF DSC functioned perfectly when connected to the Ship's 24V supply.
2. The MF DSC functioned perfectly when connected to the Battery Charger, when that Charger was switched-on and connected to the Ship's 220V supply.
3. The MF DSC failed every time when connected to the GMDSS batteries, as described in the main text.
4. GMDSS batteries were in excellent condition. They were sealed lead-acid Gel batteries, two years old, 230AH, which should be ample for the 250W MF installation.
5. GMDSS batteries were drawing about 6A when all GMDSS equipment was on standby.
6. Measuring the Battery voltage when operating the MF DSC showed a small fall from 26v to 25v then a return to 26v as the MF switch itself off.
7. Measuring the Battery current drawn showed about 6A increasing to 10A as the MF DSC was activated, then dropping to 3A when the MF switched itself off.
8. Cable run from MF Transceiver to Batteries was down one deck and halfway along a corridor, approximately 20 metres total.
9. The GMDSS installation had passed the previous three radio surveys without any MF DSC problems being highlighted.
10. GMDSS Radio equipment fit had not changed during those three years.
11. The Vessel had been in Drydock for a major refit three years previously and no prior records were on board. This was the first time my company had surveyed the vessel so we did not have records either.
12. GMDSS logbook showed daily MF DSC self test, and Weekly MF DSC tests to a coast station (Aberdeen, or Shetland MRCC) being carried out successfully.

Armed with the above list of facts, and a manual for the Furuno MF/HF SSB Radio installation - we sought out some coffee and continued head scratching.

After about half an hour of bouncing ideas about and dismissing them - occasionally double checking something and finding our original test figures were correct, we hit on the problem.

It took one more measurement to verify that we had identified the problem.

Before the answer is revealed you may care to try to figure it out for yourself? [Ed's note: The writer suggested 'Answers on a postcard to Santa/ owl letter to Hogwarts / email to AMERC News Editor' – but relented and agreed to have it published on page 7 - where you can see whether you got it right?]

.o00Oo.

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 a question on the '[AMERC Quiz](#)' is necessary when it appears that one of the other answers may also appear appropriate. *Note that those of you who have access to our 'GMDSS EXAMINER FORUM' on the AMERC website can open-up and discuss any subject/question that you feel you have an issue with ☺*

Question: Now that the UK Coastguard radio systems are fully networked, allowing the radio installations at any location to be operated from any other sector - will the Coastguard still be using geographical names on the voice channels? Or will they be using a 'common' callsign like 'UK Coastguard'?

Answer: I've spoken with HMCG HQ and also with Shetland Coastguard (thought getting confirmation from both HQ and 'front line' might be of value for this question!).

The HQ Staff Officer, and Shetland Coastguard, both confirmed (individually) that the geographical name (in this case '*Shetland Coastguard*') will normally be used – even if a broadcast from the Shetland site is being made by an operator in a different geographical location (e.g. the adjacent Sector when Shetland might be heavily involved in a major incident, but a broadcast is required on a working channel following a DSC announcement).

Both also confirm that, should a vessel initiate a call using, e.g., '*UK Coastguard this is Nonsuch*' - the reply will come as '*Nonsuch this is Shetland Coastguard*' (again, regardless of which Sector happens to be answering on behalf of Shetland CG).

Question: We have had an inquiry about the Reg's concerning how many GMDSS operators are required on a vessel, both SOLAS and non-SOLAS vessels. It mainly concerns countries in Africa.

Answer: My personal interpretation of RR Article 47 (Certificates) and Article 48 (Personnel) is:

- for SOLAS vessels using GMDSS 'international' frequencies, the equipment must be operated by, or under the control of, someone who has the appropriate qualification for the equipment - and for the sea area of operation;
- 'under the control of' is assumed to be direct supervision; so
- every bridge watch-keeper who is expected to perform the duties of Officer Of the Watch (OOW) on their own must be qualified to operate the radio equipment (s)he is likely to have to use (ROC/GOC or one of the two 'higher level' radio electronic certificates which include the GOC as a module).

In the UK, and other administrations, all deck cadets have to take the GOC as part of their CoC training.

For non-SOLAS vessels the implication from the above Articles is that the administration can decide what level of qualification they will accept - with the proviso that, if using 'international' frequencies, it must be a recognised GMDSS certificate (GOC, ROC, LRC or SRC - or one of the two higher-level electronic certificates).

.o000o.

Maritime Miscellaneous 1: Turkish cadets learn GMDSS operation using Cobham tech.

[Press release from Cobham 8th Jan 2018]

SAILOR 6000 GMDSS products enable communication and navigation on board 'SAMSUN' Training Ship

A new Turkish training ship operated by TUDEV, the Turkish Maritime Education Foundation, is now providing vital safety and operational training for Turkish maritime cadets following installation of an extensive suite of SAILOR GMDSS solutions including Inmarsat Mini-C and maritime radios, all operated through a unique touch-screen user interface.

The SAILOR 6000 GMDSS products used on board the Ro-Ro/Passenger ship 'SAMSUN', which was recently chartered and converted for training by TUDEV, the Turkish Maritime Education Foundation, are the foundation of a diverse curriculum delivered during extended training in Turkish waters. The most recent voyage took place over 60 days, with 219 cadets navigating the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts of Turkey before moving to Istanbul and the Black Sea coast.

Key learning criteria during the cruise was effective communication with the Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) centres at Istanbul Strait, the Marmara Sea and Canakkale Strait using SAILOR 6000 GMDSS radios. The course also covered general operation of MF/HF DSC, VHF DSC and setting of Navtex areas and messages, in addition to a focus on Inmarsat EGC (Enhanced Group Calls). The training was carried out on the bridge of the SAMSUN, which has space for 10 Cadets, and a dummy bridge on board with space for 20 Cadets.

The SAMSUN contract was won by Cobham SATCOM's Turkish partner ElektroDeniz, who installed the equipment and will provide ongoing service. The full SAILOR scope of supply is based on a SAILOR 6000 GMDSS delivery for operation in Sea Area A3 and includes: 2 x SAILOR 6110 mini-C GMDSS System, 3 x SAILOR 6222 VHF DSC Class A, SAILOR 6310 MF/HF 150W DSC Class A, SAILOR 6391 Navtex System and SAILOR 6280 AIS System. All SAILOR 6000 GMDSS series products are operated from the same user-friendly touch-screen interface.

"While installation of the SAILOR 6000 GMDSS equipment was fast and straight forward, the cadets also reported that it was basically 'too easy to use'," said UfukTuncer, Master of the SAMSUN and previously General Manager of vessel owners DenizcilerTurizm. "The simplicity of operation enables us to really focus on the foundations of navigation and communication, giving us the opportunity to deliver even higher quality training because we are not spending too much time on the technicalities of the system."

M/F SAMSUN EDUCATION VESSEL – [YouTube link](#)

.o000o.

Maritime Miscellaneous 2: Radio Equipment Directive

News from BEIS that the Radio Equipment Regulations have been laid in both houses and will come into force on 26 December [2017], link takes you to The Radio Equipment Regulations 2017 page, you can click on links or download the complete document as a PDF

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1206/contents/made>, There is also guidance and responses to the consultation

here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664819/red-consultation-government-response.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664824/radio-equipment-regulations-2017-guidance.pdf

.o000o.

Tales from the Key-Side – Reason for failed DSC Test Call - ANSWER:

The battery cable was of insufficient specification for the 250W transceiver that was fitted.

The Installation Manual for the transceiver included both the 150W and 250W versions. The battery cable spec' for the 150W version required a diameter of about 3mm. The 250W cable spec' required about 6.5mm.

We physically measured the diameter of the battery cable and found it to be just less than 3mm.

SO, the cable could handle the current drawn while the MF DSC was on standby, and may well have been sufficient had a 150W Tx been fitted - but when operated on Full Power on the 250W Tx the cable could not deliver the required current. This caused the MF DSC to be deprived of the required Amps and the Transceiver tripped out.

Temporary solution was to install an additional Battery Cable of 5mm diameter in parallel with the original (this being the spec' of cable that the Electrician had sufficient stock.)

I am still not sure whether a 250W Transceiver was original fit, or upgraded to 250W during the Dry-docking.

One thing I am sure of is that the 250W MF DSC had never (successfully) been tested on batteries alone.

In a real emergency, if all ship's power had been lost, the GMDSS installation WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TRANSMIT A MF/DSC DISTRESS ALERT, NOR TRANSMIT A MF VOICE DISTRESS MESSAGE, ON FULL POWER.

Editor's Note – it is not normally a function of the Ship Radio Inspector to spend time helping to find a 'fix' for deficient equipment/installation. In this case I can only assume that the surveyor concerned wouldn't be getting off the FPSO in quick time regardless; and/or that the aroma from the aforementioned coffees suggested a brew of sufficient quality might be forthcoming - and 'generated' the necessary goodwill.

.o000o.