

AMERC News

Issue 79 – Incorporates Circular 299

April 2021

Editorial

Welcome to issue 79 of AMERC News - which doubles as **Circular 299** and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors / examiners by their AMERC centre contact.

Hope this newsletter finds everyone healthy and happy. As the vaccination rollout is underway in the UK, we are all beginning to look towards the possibility of a return to some sort of normality, hopefully in the not-too-distant future. But for now, remaining cautious and safe is key!

In this issue on page 2, we have reports from the latest **Executive Committee and MCG meetings**, held via Zoom in March. There's also an announcement regarding this year's **AGM**, to be held in June, and a note from our Chairman, Paul Martin.

The **NAC Statistics Report** for GMDSS examinations is on page 2

GMDSS Criss-Cross has made a return and is on page 5. Answers will be given in the next edition.

'Maritime Miscellaneous' (page 3) In this edition, you'll find a short piece about the history and significance of the Suez Canal, very topical having made headlines recently for all the wrong reasons.

'Tales from the Key-Side, 'Member Profile(s)' is again taking a break for this edition. This is open to anyone – whether a new member, a member/centre not previously featured, or anyone with any notable changes. If you would like to feature in future editions – get in touch!

*Your submissions are always welcome for **Explanation Please? Member Profile, Maritime Misc.'** and **Tales from the Key-Side** – and other items that were likely to be of interest to others.*

Prue

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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 online in March 2021. The following items reflect discussions at MCG and/or associated items that may be of interest to Members and training centres.

The EC met on a Zoom meeting 18th March 2021 for both open and closed sessions.

Our representative Jonathan West gave his report on his attendance of an online **MNTB meeting**, where online GMDSS exams were discussed. This is still in very early days at present.

Chief Examiner Reports

The Chief Examiner conducted an interim Audit remotely for RT Training, where he reported absolutely no issues.

Chairman's Note

There have been a couple of enquiries lately from overseas organisations on becoming AMERC-approved centres. This is a note to remind all that AMERC's policy remains that we are not accepting applications for new overseas centres. This policy has been in place for several years now, and is very unlikely to change any time soon.

AGM 2021

The EC has discussed the options for this year's AGM. I'm sure it will come as no surprise to anyone that an in-person gathering in London will, sadly, not be possible. Ongoing Covid-19 restrictions still limit travel and event attendance, and AMERC's priority continues to be the welfare of its members ↑

and associates.

Instead, I am pleased to inform you that the AGM will be held online via Zoom on Thursday June 3rd 2021. Details of this will be confirmed in due course, including a detailed itinerary and instructions for how to participate.

NAC Statistics Report

(Editor's note: As with all NAC statistics at the moment, Covid-19 must be taken into consideration when looking at these numbers.)

GOC - exam numbers are down 46% from the same period last year and overseas exams have decreased by 48%. First time pass rates have remained mostly the same, with a small increase overseas by 4%.

ROC - exam numbers have decreased by 42% for the UK and 44% for overseas. Whilst the first-time pass rate for the UK has increased by 11% the overseas rate has remained the same.

LRC - exams have decreased by 76% in the UK, remaining largely the same overseas.

There have been 974 GMDSS certificates issued for this year against 1823 last year.

GMDSS Examination Statistics – rolling annual report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1st Jan 2020 – 31st Dec 2020** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 st time)	PASSED (1 st attempt)	% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT
UK GOC	451 (413)	409 (378)	378/413 (91.53%)
ALL GOC	914 (851)	846 (790)	790/851 (92.83%)
UK ROC	59 (58)	57 (56)	56/58 (96.55%)
ALL ROC	94 (91)	88 (86)	86/91 (94.51%)
LRC	40 (38)	36 (36)	36/38 (94.74%)

Maritime Miscellaneous



The Suez Canal and the Ever Given crisis

The Suez Canal is a man-made waterway in Egypt, connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, dividing Africa and Asia. Construction

of the canal was ordered by the Ottoman Empire. Ferdinand de Lesseps created the Suez Canal Company, starting work in 1859. The work took 10 years, officially opening in November 1869. It offers a direct route between the North Atlantic and Northern Indian oceans, via the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, reducing the journey distance from the Arabian Sea to London by approximately 8,900 kilometres (5,500 mi), or 8 to 10 days.

One of the planet's major trade routes, roughly 50 ships pass through the canal on an average day, accounting for about 12% of global trade. The Suez Canal made headlines around the world at on March 23rd, 2021, as a 400-meter-long vessel, *Ever Given*, became grounded across the waterway. The ship remained stuck there for a total of 6 days, holding up over 300 other vessels. Estimates put the loss of trade value during this time at roughly \$9.6 billion dollars.



So what went wrong? The Egyptian government requires all ships traversing the canal to be boarded by their 'Suez Crew'; representatives from the Suez Canal Authority. At the time of the accidental grounding of the ship, two SCA pilots were on board and had control of the vessel. According to reports, the ship was caught in a sandstorm, which is not uncommon for the area. The containers on board 'acted like a sail', blowing the ship off course where its stern and bow were lodged in the canal banks.

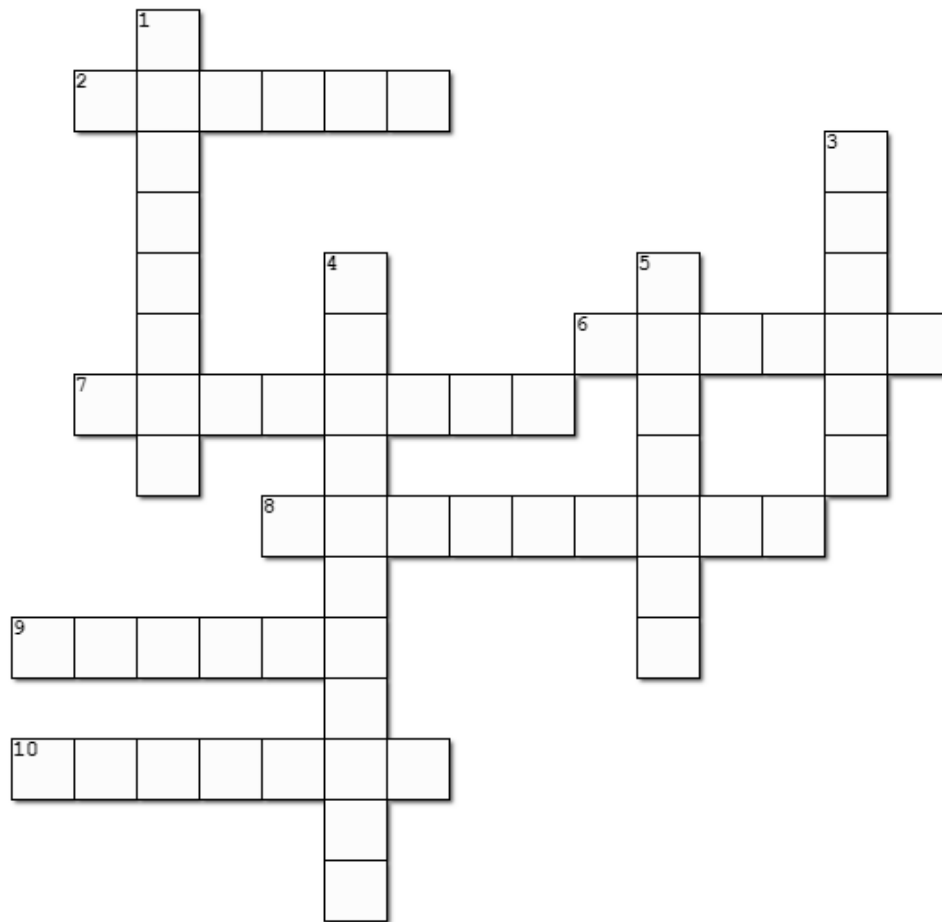
Extensive marine salvage operations were used, coordinating a team of Egyptian, Dutch, and Japanese, and American workers. Tug boats, diggers, suction dredgers and pumps were all utilised to try and get the ship moving. For days, nothing worked. Finally, on March 29th, a combination of a supermoon's 'king tide', ballast-adjustment, 14 tug boats, and good weather allowed the ship to be pulled free.

Whilst the seriousness of the incident cannot be overlooked, essentially it was caused by a combination of bad luck, technical and human error. Throughout the entire crisis, no members of crew or salvage operators were injured. After a very difficult year for everyone around the world as a result of Covid-19, many people online jumped at the chance for an international moment of levity. As a result, the internet was awash with memes and comical suggestions on how to move the ship.



The incident has raised questions about the need for ships of such a size as the *Ever Given*, in an economy already reeling as a result of the pandemic. So called, 'just-in-time' manufacturing, and consumer's expectations for speedy global delivery have already been placing huge strains on existing infrastructure. The incident was described by Michael Safi in The Guardian as a "worst-case scenario that many saw coming".

GMDSS Criss-Cross Edition 79 - answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS / ADRS, *where appropriate*.



Down

- 1. Waterway separating Denmark and Sweden
- 3. VHF working channel for Cherbourg Pilots (France)
- 4. Russia's most SE'ly seaport; MRCC; and VHF/MF DSC station
- 5. Cape St SW'ly point of Portugal

Across

- 2. Port city and capital of Mozambique
- 6. Largest island in the Mediterranean
- 7. New Zealand port on the Bay of Plenty
- 8. Major German port on the River Elbe
- 9. Sea port serving Lima (capital of Peru)
- 10. Mexico's most southerly MRCC; and VHF DSC Station

Issue 78 answers

Across: 3 = Byblos, 4 = Jebel Ali, 6 = Alexandria, 10= Dalian

Down: 1 = Whiskey, 2 = Los Angeles, 3 = Bering, 5 = Cam Rhan, 7 = Adelaide, 8 = Akureyri, 9 = Matola