

# AMERC News

Issue 84 – Incorporates Circular 304

March 2022

## **Editorial**

Welcome to issue 84 of AMERC News - which doubles as **Circular 304** and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors / examiners by their AMERC centre contact.

Spring has sprung, and here at AMERC, preparations are well underway for our upcoming AGM.

This is scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup>, and like last year, we'll be holding the event online via Zoom. The decision was made following a vote by our members; the overwhelming majority voting in favour of a virtual event as a safer and more appropriate option, considering the risks still associated with international travel, and Covid infection numbers on the rise again in the UK.

All full and associate members should have received notification and invites via email, but if you haven't, please get in touch with Julie Cartwright ([amerctreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:amerctreasurer@gmail.com))

On page 2, you'll find updates from the latest **MCG open session meeting**, which was held on Thursday 10th March via Zoom.

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

**'Maritime Miscellaneous'** (page 3) features a reminder of current exam fees, and also a note on the upcoming new edition of The Handbook for Marine Radio Communication, by Graham Lees and Willie Williamson.

This issue's **Tales from the Key-Side** (page 4) features a story sent in from Phil Pryor at Western Maritime Training, Plymouth. Many thanks to Phil for sending this in!

**GMDSS Criss-Cross** can be found on page 5. Answers will be given in the next edition.

*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.*

Thanks for reading! Please get in touch if you have anything to add to next quarter's newsletter.

*Prue*

Mail: [amercsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:amercsecretary@gmail.com)

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 2022. The following items reflect discussions at MCG and/or associated items that may be of interest to Members and training centres.

### Summary of MCG open session, held via Zoom on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

#### Chief Examiner Reports

Keith was able to conduct another full, in person audit for Shetland UHI in February – ensuring all Covid protective measures were adhered to at all times. Temporary extensions for CACs were approved following successful remote audits for Tyne Coast College, and TS Rahaman. Congratulations to all centres!

A representative from the MCA confirmed that AMERC is permitted to continue conducting its interim audits remotely.

#### New AEV Application

A Southampton centre is going through the process of gaining AMERC approval to run GMDSS courses. Keith and members of the EC are working closely with Chieftain Training, ensuring all procedures are followed in their aim to become a new AEV. The MCG was given an update on the centre’s progress, following an initial visit by EC member Gregor McGowan. Another visit is planned to observe the centre delivering a GMDSS course.

#### New examiners

The EC approved UKSA’s request to promote Gregor McGowan to full examiner status, following his successful completion of all required training. Congratulations, Gregor!

### 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** - UK exam numbers have increased by 69% from the same period last year and overseas exams have increased by 9%. UK first-time pass rate has remained largely the same.

**ROC** - ROC exam numbers have increased by 42% for the UK and overseas have decreased by 43% compared to last year. UK first-time pass rate has decreased by 4%, and first-time pass rate for overseas exams has increased by 10%.

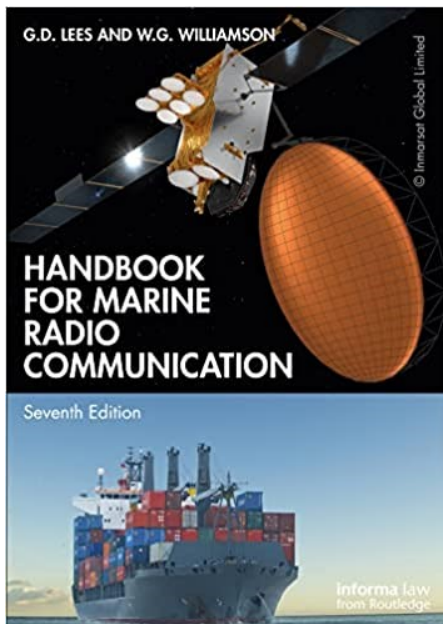
**LRC** - UK exams have increased by 175%, however, overseas LRC exams have decreased by 10% since last year

There have been 1345 GMDSS certificates issued for this year against 974 last year.

**GMDSS Examination Statistics – rolling annual report:** National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2021** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 <sup>st</sup> time)	PASSED (1 <sup>st</sup> attempt)	% PASSED 1 <sup>ST</sup> ATTEMPT
UK GOC	764 (704)	694 (638)	638/704 (90.6%)
ALL GOC	1269 (1186)	1173 (1097)	1097/1186 (92.5%)
UK ROC	84 (81)	78 (75)	75/81 (92.6%)
ALL ROC	104 (101)	98 (95)	95/101 (94.1%)
UK LRC	55 (55)	49 (49)	49/55 (89.1%)
ALL LRC	73 (73)	67 (67)	67/73 (91.8%)

## Maritime Miscellaneous



**The 7th Edition of The Handbook for Marine Radio Communication** is available for pre-order now!

The new version of this informative book by Graham Lees and Willie Williamson will be published in May 2022.

Readers can pre-order softback or hardback editions from Amazon here:

[www.tinyurl.com/MRCHandbookPreOrderLink](http://www.tinyurl.com/MRCHandbookPreOrderLink)

The writers anticipate the publication will be available as an e-book at some point in the near future.

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I have received a request for clarification on the current **AMERC Exam Fees**.

Up-to-date fees are as follows:

	GOC UK	GOC Overseas	ROC UK	ROC Overseas	LRC UK	LRC Overseas	SAT Module	RNLI
Exam Fee	180	125	160	120	140	100	60	0

(Fees correct as of 2019, with the exception of the RNLI fee which was waived following a membership vote at the 2021 AGM)

## ***Tales from the Key Side***

### "A Close Call" (South Cornish coast, July 2021)

I count myself very fortunate to be the skipper of the beautiful topsail schooner "Anny of Charlestown", ranging up and down the Westcountry coastline during the summer months giving charter guests a taste of traditional sailing. It means I talk to the Coastguard and other vessels several times a day, mostly on VHF but occasionally on MF as well. I like to think that, being a GMDSS examiner and lifelong mariner, my voice procedure is pretty good. And for the most part it is. An incident in July last year, however, served to highlight that even the best of us can get it wrong when the proverbial hits the fan!



A routine transit under engine took an unnerving twist when, in 35 knots of onshore wind, a 3-metre swell and a rocky headland 250 metres to leeward we took a rope around the prop. The engine restarted but stalled again when ahead was selected. We had insufficient time or sea room to raise sail, and square riggers are not that great to windward at the best of times. I ordered the mate and the deckhand to let the anchor go with all scope to buy us time, and for the first (and hopefully only) time in my life, I lifted that flap and held that red button in for 5 seconds.

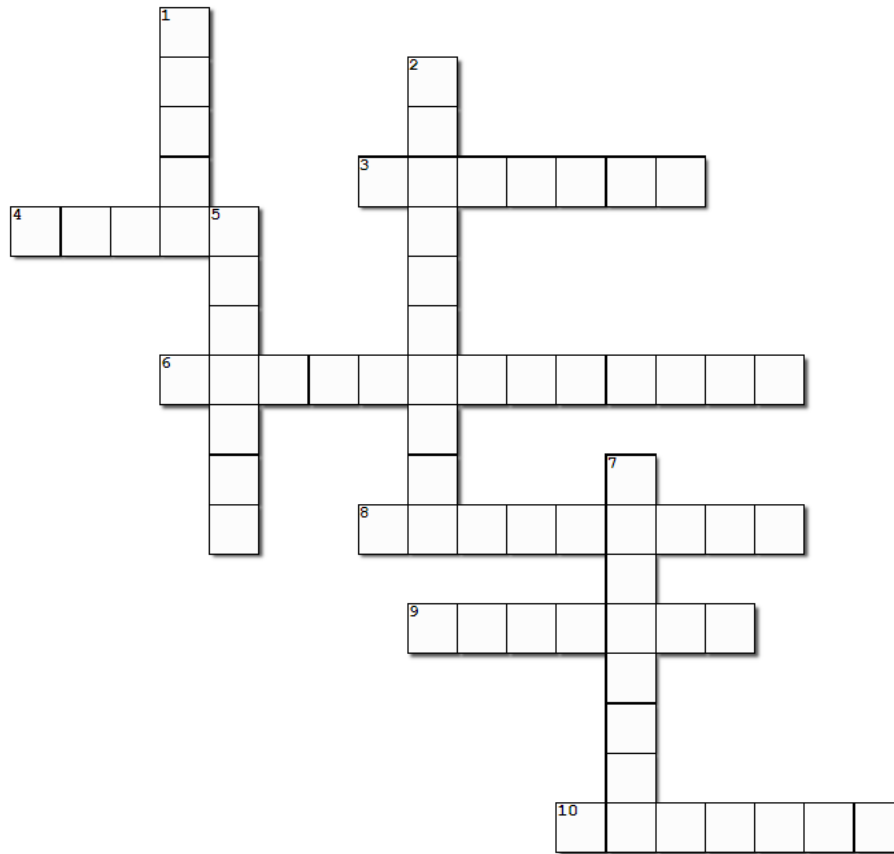
My subsequent conversation with the Coastguard was, quite frankly, rubbish. In my defence I was kind of busy. The radio sets are in the chart house (a definite modification for the coming season) and I needed to be on deck taking charge of things. Replies to the Coastguard's obviously urgent attempts to contact me were clipped and bore no relation to proper procedure whatsoever. This contrasted with an incident a few weeks earlier when a guest suffered a seizure and I had to Pan Pan for a medical evacuation. That was textbook, if I say so myself. Before the crew managed to deploy the anchor, I tried an old trick and it worked. With the engine restarted I engaged astern and, thankfully, that unwound whatever it was that was round the shaft. With only 50 metres between ship and shore, I motored hard astern into the breaking swell and out into open sea. Well away from danger, I gingerly tried the engine going ahead and all seemed well. We resumed our passage and I subsequently issued something that resembled a more structured distress cancellation message.

Throughout the whole episode Falmouth Coastguard were calm and collected. They are, of course, well used to extracting information from people who are potentially cold, wet, tired, injured or frightened. I was none of these, so why was my response so appalling?

The whole thing brought into focus the humanity of a distress situation, and it has almost certainly altered the way I regard candidates when I'm examining them. Perhaps not everything is in our textbooks.

*Phil Pryor (Western Maritime Training, Plymouth)*

**GMDSS Criss-Cross Edition 84** - answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS / ADRS, *where appropriate*.



**Down:**

- 1: Island just off SW coast of Panama
- 2: Name of US bay where a second Evergreen container ship ran aground recently
- 5: LRC control affecting level of incoming radio signals
- 7: NAVAREA IX

**Across:**

- 3: Sea bed where the wreck of Shackleton's *Endurance* was finally found
- 4: Name of US Navy's newest destroyer, *Jack H.* \_\_\_\_\_
- 6: Surname of disgraced P&O CEO
- 8: Port city in SE Ukraine
- 9: Sea to the east of Azerbaijan
- 10: Major river running through Ukraine

**Issue 82 answers**

Down: 1= Grindavik 3= Miyazaki 5= Lake Victoria 8= Tianjin  
 Across: 1= Gabon 2= Oscar 4=London 6=Tasman Sea 7=Over 9=Antwerp 10= Neskaupstadur