

AMERC News

Issue 91 – Incorporates Circular 313

February 2024

Editorial

Welcome to issue 91 of AMERC News - which doubles as **Circular 313** and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors / examiners by their AMERC centre coordinator.

A very Happy New Year to all readers, from all of us at AMERC! Hope everyone's enjoying 2024 so far.

On page 2, our regular feature: Updates from the most recent **MCG open session meeting**, and the quarterly **NAC Statistics Report** for GMDSS examinations.

You'll find a notice on page 3 summarising the Pre-AGM Circular, recently distributed to all members. This contains information about this year's Executive Committee vacant appointments, should any readers be interested in taking more of an active role within AMERC.

Pages 4 – 6 feature a short article regarding Inmarsat's MST from Graham Lees, thank you Graham! Also, an update on the MCA's MGN 550 guidelines for Lithium batteries (excerpt sent in by Gregor McGowan, taken - with thanks - from the PYT newsletter.)

Our **Ask AMERC** feature returns on page 7, where we answer questions submitted anonymously via our website since the last newsletter. If you'd like to throw any tricky GMDSS queries at us, here's the link : www.amerc.ac.uk/ask_a_question.php

GMDSS Criss-Cross is back on page 8. Answers will be given in the next edition.

*As always, your submissions are very welcome for **Explanation Please? Member Profile, Maritime Misc.** and **Tales from the Key-Side.***

Thanks for reading!

The **Maritime Consultation Group** (MCG) meets regularly - 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 person on December 14th 2023. 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 on 14th December 2023

Invited Observers

We welcomed Anindya Banerjee (Blackpool & Fylde), as an observer to this session, who has expressed interest in joining the EC in future. At the next quarterly meeting in March, we will hopefully be joined in the Open session by some more new faces: Doug Innes (Chieftain Training) and Robbie Robertson (RNLI).

Centre news

- A new proposed AEV in Helensburgh for Chieftain Training was discussed, following an approval visit by Keith Mitchell, who reported the centre is following procedure well. As such, provisional approval was granted for the new site to plan an ROC course to continue their journey towards AEV approval.
- One of our centres in Florida (formerly Bluewater) have submitted plans to relocate to a larger premises and operate under a different business name: PYTUSA. Keith reported he will visit the centre in person to check these changes in early February.
- One of our centres in India reported they have been victims of a cybercrime attack, where an email account was intercepted by hackers. They have now taken measures to rectify the problem. AMERC would like to encourage all centres to ensure all staff and systems are up to date with cybersecurity awareness/protection.

New Examiner approvals

Congratulations to the following applicants:

- Alfred Nazareth (full) – Anglo Eastern
- Alan Rackett (full) – Chieftain Training
- Matthew Blanchard (probationary) – RNLI

Chief Examiner Reports

Keith recently conducted full audits for Academy Tema Safety & Training, and RT Training (who are also moving premises). The MCG approved these reports and new CACs will be requested. Keith also delivered a successful audit report for Warsash Maritime School's ETO provision; and a further report for RNLI's new SatMod addition.

NAC Statistics Report (all stats compared to same period last year)

GOC - UK exam numbers have decreased by 4%, while overseas exams have increased by 30%. UK and overseas first-time pass rates have remained largely the same.

ROC - exam numbers have decreased by 27% for the UK, while overseas remains the same. UK first-time pass rate has increased by 13%, while overseas has dropped by 2%.

LRC - UK exams have increased by 44%, while overseas exams have decreased by the same amount - 44%!

There have been 1749 GMDSS certificates issued for this year against 1582 last year.

GMDSS Examination Statistics – rolling annual report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1st October 2022 – 30th September 2023** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 st time)		PASSED (1 st attempt)		% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT	
UK GOC	713	(668)	656	(614)	614/668	(91.92%)
ALL GOC	1612	(1520)	1501	(1419)	1419/1520	(93.36%)
UK ROC	82	(79)	79	(76)	76/79	(96.20%)
ALL ROC	142	(136)	136	(130)	130/136	(95.59%)
LRC	89	(84)	83	(79)	79/84	(94.05%)
ALL LRC	112	(105)	101	(98)	98/105	(93.33%)

AMERC AGM 2024:

If you are a full or associate member of AMERC, and you have not yet received your invitation from Julie Cartwright, please get in touch with her as soon as possible. (amerctreasurer@gmail.com) If you have not received the Pre-AGM Circular, please let me know as soon as possible. (amercsecretary@gmail.com)

Will all members and centre coordinators please check that we have your correct contact details listed on our website. I must remind everyone that it is your responsibility to ensure AMERC has your up-to-date details, and to notify me of any changes as soon as possible.

As previously communicated to all members, this year's upcoming AGM will now be an in-person event (as opposed to online) held May 15th -17th 2024. It will be held in the same location as last year, the Copthorne Hotel, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK. The 2024 AGM & Examiner Panel meeting will take place on Thursday 16th May, with delegates arriving in the afternoon of Wednesday 15th and departing the morning of Friday 18th .

This is due to newly proposed changes to how GMDSS examinations could be structured, and a resulting opportunity to consider a new series of AMERC examination papers for 2025. Our Chief Examiner has stressed the necessity for a full discussion and pooling of ideas between AMERC and our examiners regarding the above.

As part of this event, there will be an extended examiners' panel meeting, which all examiner delegates will need to attend. It is very important that AMERC can ensure any changes brought about are done with the input and approval of our examiners, for the benefit of everybody involved.

Executive Committee Vacancies – open to applications (voted on by membership at AGM)

- There are **three** trustee vacancies on the Executive Committee available in 2024, and nominations from Full Members are invited. Nominations (duly proposed and seconded by an existing EC member) should be with the Secretary by 31st March 2024.

Executive Committee Officer Vacancies – open to applications (appointments selected by existing EC)

- Chief Examiner (current Chief Examiner will not be re-applying)**
- Company Secretary (current Secretary will be re-applying)
- Company Treasurer (current Treasurer will be re-applying)

Any persons interested in applying for one of the above roles: please let me know via email and I can provide you with job descriptions and further details. Completed applications must be emailed to amercsecretary@gmail.com by 1st March 2024.

****If you are interested in the Chief Examiner vacancy, please ensure you email amercsecretary@gmail.com as soon as possible.**

Maritime Miscellaneous

INMARSAT finally looks likely to have a maritime safety terminal (MST) available

As we are all aware, Fleet Broadband (FB) is currently not GMDSS compliant without the addition of a Maritime Safety Terminal (MST). Since the system was announced by Inmarsat, no manufacturer has come to market with an MST. However, finally, that seems about to change with the announcement of a collaborative agreement between Inmarsat and Intellian Technologies Inc. of South Korea.

The new MST's will become the standard Inmarsat Maritime product for the next generation Fleet Safety service and will fulfil the requirements and performance standards of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as part of a range of maritime SOLAS approved ship borne equipment including Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) system and Ship Security Alert System (SSAS).

In addition to offering reliable access to Fleet Safety services, which includes an innovative Maritime Safety Information interface, the terminal features a Distress Chat function among its enhanced capabilities. This function automatically alerts the nearest Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in case of an emergency on board, ensuring swift and coordinated response efforts. It also notifies nearby vessels, creating a network of support during critical situations.

It is envisaged that with the fulness of time, the addition of an MST will replace the current requirement for an Inmarsat C system which has underpinned satellite safety at sea since the beginning of GMDSS in 1992.



- Graham Lees



Important Guidelines for Lithium-Ion Battery Electrical Installations: MCA's MGN 550 Update

In its ongoing commitment to maritime safety, the Professional Yachting Association (PYA) has condensed the latest guidance from the UK government, specifically [MGN 550 \(M+F\) Amendment 1](#). This update focuses on ensuring the safe design, installation, and operation of lithium-ion batteries in shipboard electrical systems—a critical resource for yacht professionals and crew members to maintain electrical safety and reliability on board.

Summary:

[MGN 550 \(M+F\) Amendment 1](#) comprehensively addresses the utilization of lithium-ion batteries in maritime electrical installations:

1. Risk Management:

Emphasizing risk assessment and mitigation throughout the lifecycle, the guidance identifies potential hazards associated with lithium-ion batteries and recommends measures to fortify safety protocols.

2. Installation Standards:

Rigorous installation standards are outlined to prevent electrical failures, short circuits, and thermal runaway, ensuring the steadfast integrity of the onboard electrical system.

3. Operational Guidelines:

Clear instructions for proper operation and maintenance of lithium-ion batteries are provided, including monitoring, charging, and handling procedures to mitigate potential safety risks.

4. Fire Safety Protocols:

Given the fire risks, the guidance details fire detection, suppression, and extinguishing systems while underscoring the importance of crew training for effective response to battery-related fire incidents.

5. Emergency Response Planning:

The document stresses the necessity for a well-defined emergency response plan in the event of a lithium-ion battery incident, outlining immediate actions for crew members to ensure onboard safety.

6. Documentation and Reporting Standards:

The guidance underscores meticulous documentation, including design specifications, installation details, and routine maintenance records, with a prompt reporting requirement for any deviations or incidents.

Implications for Yachting Professionals:

Yachting professionals, comprising captains, engineers, and crew members, are urged to scrutinize [MGN 550 \(M+F\) Amendment 1](#) to uphold compliance with the latest safety standards for lithium-ion battery installations. The PYA advocates comprehensive training sessions for crew members to acquaint them with these guidelines and emergency response procedures.

Conclusion:

In an era where yachts increasingly adopt lithium-ion batteries for enhanced energy storage, adherence to safety guidelines becomes imperative. The MCA's [MGN 550 \(M+F\) Amendment 1](#) provides yachting professionals with a helpful guide, accentuating the significance of embracing the latest safety standards to ensure the welfare of crew members and the resilience of onboard electrical systems.

Kind regards,

The PYA Team

- Extract from [the Professional Yachting Association](#)

Ask AMERC

(Reminder: this ask feature is completely anonymous. Therefore, please do not send in any questions specific to your centre, or your personal GMDSS certificate queries...and please try and keep the questions GMDSS-related! – **Ed.**)

Question (received 04/12/23):

“Where can we check UK GMDSS revalidation or endorsements of an individual? Like can all UK COC be checked/verified online?”

Answer:

It is not possible to check or verify GMDSS qualifications online.

However, in certain circumstances our NAC Manager can be contacted for this purpose. For example, if a potential employer wishes to check the authenticity of a document they have been provided with as a reference. In this instance, they should email the NAC Manager a scan of the document. She would then be able to confirm if it matches our AMERC database.

Another example; a coordinator from one of our approved centres may ask the NAC Manager to confirm whether a student already holds certain qualifications.

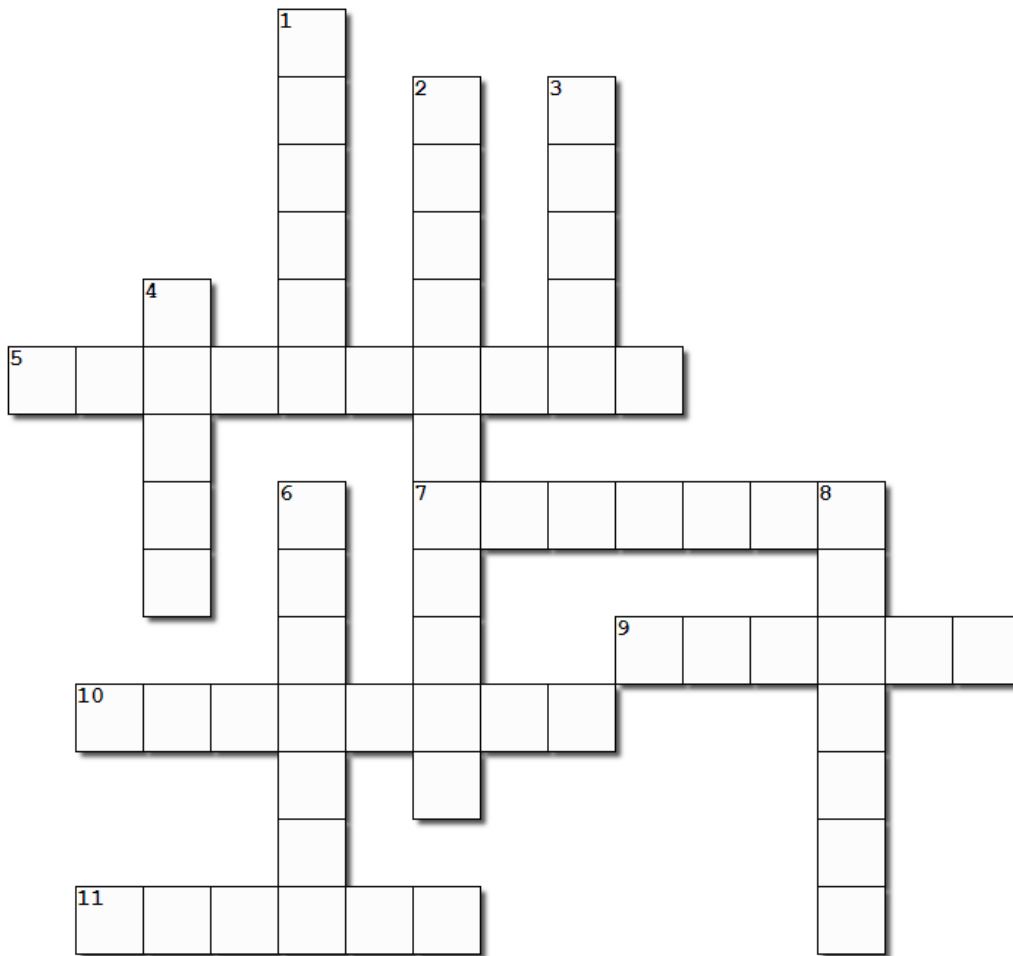
If an individual wishes to confirm details of their own qualification, they would need to provide the NAC Manager with sufficient proof to verify their identity as the certificate holder.



If you have any GMDSS queries you would like to throw at us (no matter how tricky or simple!) here's the link: www.amerc.ac.uk/ask_a_question.php

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Answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS / ADRS, where appropriate.



Across

5: Main airport on Isle of Man (10)

7: Rebel group currently carrying out attacks on vessels in the Red Sea (7)

9: “_____ Sea”: western coastal waterways between Seattle and Vancouver (6)

10: Battle of “_____” (1827): the last to be fought by the Royal Navy entirely using sailing ships (8)

11: Russian warship “_____ Kunikov”, recently reported to have been sunk by Ukraine forces (6)

Down:

1: Inventor of the famous code, “_____ Morse” (6)

2: The first “A” in “NOAA” (11)

3: Country with Call Sign prefix “9H” (5)

4: Coordinator for NAVAREA VIII (5)

6: Capital of Venezuela (7)

8: Smallest of Japan’s four main islands (7)

Issue 90 answers

Across: 2= Brunei 4= Labrador 9= Indicating 10= Chile 11= Monkey

Down: 1= Bismarck 3= Frequency 5= Out 6= Lithium 7= High 8= Palermo