

AMERC NEWS

Incorporates Circular 229

March 2007

Issue Twenty-three — Read Inside

AGM NOTICES CIRCULAR 228

Advertisement for Deputy & Assistant Chief Examiners

MARITIME CONSULTANCY GROUP (MCG)

Photographs Welcomes
HMCG & CSOC Recognition Revalidation Unlikely
Plymouth Name Change MNTB Guidelines Revalidation
Application Forms (Re-examination)

M-NOTICES & MCGA NEWS

OFCOM & LICENSING AIS SART PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

MARITIME MISCELLANY

UK MSI Changes LORAN-C & USCG GALILEO Latest
ADRS Vol 6 PERTH LES Closed

HERE & THERE

Seafarers' Education Grants W/T ACT 2006 UK Port Detentions
Australian GMDSS Book by Ian Waugh.

EQUIPMENT SALE

GMDSS Equipment Sell-Off

SELECTED INDEX TO THE NEWS

TECHNICAL UPDATES

BACK PAGE

Veterans' News Book by Denise Brehaut

EXAMINATION PANEL SUPPLEMENT

Proposals for Change to the GOC

AMERC NEWS is the Journal of the Association of Marine Electronics and Radio Colleges.
It is distributed to all Members, Associates and Affiliates of the Association.
AMERC Ltd encourages the copying and wider distribution of AMERC NEWS.

EDITORIAL

AGM and the Examiners' Panel will soon be upon us when we will have some important 'matters arising.' Last year we discussed at length a proposition by Phil Davies that the OPT examination should be scenario-based (see page 6 in Issue 21) and it was agreed that this should be trialled. The Warsash Maritime Academy kindly offered to do so and we look forward with interest to the evaluation when it is presented to the Examiners' Panel.

For some time Willie Williamson has been critical of the GOC examination and he recently presented a paper consolidating his thoughts to the Maritime Consultative Group. It was decided that Willie should speak to this paper at the Examination Panel and to sharpen debate that it should have prior circulation in AMERC NEWS. It appears as a supplement to this Issue so that it can be easily detached and brought to AGM. Please do this if you are attending. It is very important that we have feedback on the changes Willie is proposing and if you are not attending (*this applies especially to our overseas colleagues*) let Eric have your views.

I have, rightly, had representations about making back Issues of the NEWS searchable. I have tackled this by trying to convert the last Issue to PDF format to allow search functions via the Association's website. This was not entirely successful given the fact that I do not have professional facilities but I hope I have found a way to improve the start I have made. Using more conventional means I have produced a 'book index' which you will find on pages twelve and thirteen of this Issue.

What became apparent during the compiling of that index was how various events have reduced the relevance of some earlier content. To take an example, references to the Electronics & Communication Board outcomes and proceedings do not have the resonance they once had. Also, some items were of general interest and it did not seem worthwhile to index them. I judged it best to choose the years 2005 to 2006 and if the arbitrary start date is too late, feedback will tell me. Furthermore, it did not seem sensible to repeat the Examination Statistics since they appear in the same place in each Issue and the Technical Updates are listed on the website. It is my intention to update the Index with each Issue, although there will always be a three month lag.

By universal agreement the Association's website is looking tired and the content does not fully reflect our work and mission; indeed it has a number of inaccuracies. This matter is now on the Executive Committee's agenda and the intention to redesign the site and revise its content was expressed in the last Issue. Kevin Walsh has submitted designs, one of which was approved as the framework. The next step will be to revise that content and offers to do so will be gratefully received. It is expected that the new format will be available at AGM.

Looking forward to renewing old friendships in Gateshead.

Brian Cotton

2007 AGM

Gateshead May 23 - 25

By now you should have heard from Eric Lamb about the Association's 2007 AGM which will be held at the Legacy Springfield Hotel, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear. The hotel is on Durham Road and access by road, rail and air is excellent. The airport is served by a metro link to Gateshead and the railway station by the GNER and Virgin companies. For those using autoroutes, the postcode is NE9 5BT.

Delegates are expected to arrive in the afternoon of Wednesday 23 May and depart after breakfast on Friday 25 May. The AGM will be held between 1130 and 1300 on Thursday 24 May and the rest of that day will be devoted to the Examiners' Panel.

The AGM, dinner and overnight accommodation will be held at the hotel. Two nights' accommodation will be provided by the Association for one delegate from each centre (or member). A longer stay may be arranged on a personal basis for those who would wish to do so.

Eric stressed in his communication that he needed your reservation forms back with him as soon as possible and this should have been done by 05 April.

CIRCULAR 228

We remind Members that each Issue of AMERC NEWS is also numbered as a Circular and this is 229. You will already have had notice of the AGM as required by the Association Constitution. It was sent out by the Hon Secretary as AMERC Circular 228. This is a reminder for you to ensure your file is complete.

APPLICATIONS INVITED DEPUTY & ASSISTANT CHIEF EXAMINERS

The Executive Committee has placed the following advertisement in AMERC NEWS.

Applications are invited from existing AMERC Ltd., Examiners for the part time posts of Deputy Chief Examiner and Assistant Chief Examiner (Overseas). Both posts will attract a level of remuneration.

For further details contact the Hon. Secretary Keith Mitchell at Jewel & Esk College.

MARITIME CONSULTANCY GROUP (THE MCG)

The AMERC Chairman advised in the last Issue that the Maritime Board has been disbanded and replaced by an 'open session' of the Executive Committee. This is now being described as the Maritime Consultancy Group (MCG).

We reproduce below for your attention and interest some of the matters that were dealt with at MCG meetings held in York in December last and at Kendal in March.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The Executive Committee has agreed that AMERC Ltd will accept digital images with examination application forms. The requirements are that the image must be on photographic paper; it must be of passport size and it must be a true likeness (certified by the Examiner).

'Normal' photographs remain acceptable.

WELCOMING

Michael Moir of the Aberdeen REC and Niccolo Bovini of the TST REC who have been approved as probationary examiners

David White who has been entered his six month probationary period as lecturer at the Lairdsie Maritime Centre.

The THESI Centre which now has full course approval.

HMCG CSOC

At AGM, the Executive Committee will be recommending AMERC recognition of the HM Coastguard Coast Station Operator's Certificate (CSOC) and its restricted version. The Certificates will carry the Association Chairman's signature and logo.

STW 38

It is unlikely that revalidation of GMDSS certificates will go ahead in this IMO cycle.

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE

Plymouth College has changed its name to City College Plymouth.

MNTB GUIDELINES

Consultation on the revised MNTB Guidelines for the ROC and GOC has now completed. The Guidelines will be published in due course and will then be featured in AMERC NEWS.

APPLICATION FORMS (RE-EXAMINATION)

If a GOC or ROC holder does not have the required one year in five sea time (under STCW '95) and is required to have a re-examination, Examiners should write 'RE-EXAMINATION' on the application form.

Holders of pre-01 January 1994 certificates will be issued with 'hard-cover' GOC to replace the 'paper-type.' Hard-cover GOC holders will be issued with a letter confirming the pass.

EXAMINERS' PANEL SUPPLEMENT

Check out the Examiners supplement at the very back of this Issue. Please bring it to the meeting at Gateshead or send in comments if you are not attending.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

It has been decided to pay particular attention during course audit to timetables, lesson plans and course notes. This would reduce the requirement for the Chief Examiner to sit in on long parts of courses.

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GMDSS EXAMINATION STATISTICS

The NAC has provided the following GMDSS Examination Statistics for the period July 2006 to September 2006.

EXAMINATION	ENTERED	PASSED
UK GOC	215	145
ALL GOC	401	313
UK ROC	26	26
ALL ROC	36	34
LRC	81	76

And for the period September 2006 to December 2006:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED	PASSED
UK GOC	206	174
ALL GOC	450	389
UK ROC	76	73
ALL ROC	217	199
LRC	139	125

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AMERC WEBSITE

By universal agreement the AMERC website needs improvement to its styling. Its content, too, has not kept pace with changes to the Association's structure and mission. A number of the individuals mentioned on the site have retired or moved on and change has been on the Executive Committee's agenda for some time.

The Executive Committee has approved a format from several designs produced by students at Southampton Solent University and this will be presented at the AGM. The next step is to review and change the content and any member with ideas or suggestions on this should approach the Hon. Secretary before AGM.

M NOTICES

The following M-Notices appear to have some applicability to Members. The full lists of M-notices appear on the MCA website (www.mcga.gov.uk).

MSN 1812 (M) SOLAS CHAPTER V

This important Note gives details of amendments to Chapter V of the SOLAS Convention in force in July 2006. It gives various definitions relative to distress and SAR. It also describes changes affecting carriage requirements for navigation systems and fittings of simplified VDR for categories of ships.

It replaces MSN 1800 (M)

February 2007

MSN 1810 (M) RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS

This Note gives details of changes to the SOLAS regulations applied to radiocommunications. There are some important changes for Examiners to note including guidelines for EPIRB testing. It also comments on automatic updating of the ship's position every four hours during a distress alert.

It also advises that communications equipment needs to be capable of indicating the positions of assisting ships by automatic means.

December 2006

MSN 1802 (M) CoC YACHT OFFICERS

This Note describes the system of deck officer certification for large commercial or private sailing and motor vessels and sail training vessels.

October 2006

MIN 265 (M+F) NAVTEX WEATHER

This Note gives details of a number of standard abbreviations to weather forecasts used in Navtex broadcasts since November 2006. These are used to reduce the length of broadcasts and to reduce the risk of over-running.

December 2006

MIN 268 (M+F) AIS CLASS B

This Note describes MCA trials in the Solent using Class B AIS transponders. It indicated positive reactions between devices of Classes A & B which will lead to further research. This Note replaces MIN 199 (M+F)

February 2007

MIN 263 (M+F) REVIEW OF FEES

This Note gives details of revised fees and payment methods (from September 2006) for marine examinations and documents.

October 2006

MCGA NEWS

The UK Department of Transport has announced a new Head of the MCGA. He is Mr. Peter Cardy, formerly with Macmillan Cancer Support. He replaces Mr. John Astbury who retires from his post as Acting Chief Executive in May. The Association wishes them both well.

OFCOM & SHIP LICENSING

Late in 2006, the UK regulatory body Ofcom released details of its new lifetime licensing services. We reproduce below an edited version of the text that appears on the Ofcom website which we hope is self-explanatory.

REFORM OF SHIPS' RADIO LICENSING

On 22 February 2005, Ofcom published a consultation document on ships' radio licensing. In that document, Ofcom proposed to reform ships' radio licensing in order to reduce the regulatory burden on both radio users and the regulator. Following the consultation Ofcom held further informal discussions with several key stakeholders to ensure that plans were developed appropriately. As a result of these discussions Ofcom has decided to implement the following reforms:

- To issue 'lifetime' ships' radio licences which shall remain valid for as long as the licence details remain correct or until such time as the licence is either revoked by Ofcom or surrendered by the licensee. There shall be no end date on the ships' radio licence. Such licences shall be personal to the licensee (whether individual or corporate) and will not be transferable (for example upon the sale of the vessel).
- To issue 'lifetime' ships' portable radio licences which shall remain valid for as long as the licence details remain correct or until such time as the licence is either revoked by Ofcom or surrendered by the licensee. There shall be no end date on the ships' portable radio licence. Such licences shall be personal to the licensee (whether individual or corporate) and will not be transferable (for example upon the sale of the ships' portable radio equipment).
- To provide an online, web-based, self-service licensing service as an alternative to the postal service;
- To issue electronic licences (probably PDF® documents) to users of the online, web-based, self-service licensing service free of charge. The licensee would then print a hard copy of the licence which must be kept on board the vessel;
- To continue to make paper licences available (but subject to an administrative charge);
- To modify the original proposal by requiring licensees to confirm their licence details at least once every ten years in order to maintain their lifetime licence;
- To dispense with the licence disc.

The online licensing website can be found at:

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/licensing/olc/>

Peter Ingram, Ofcom's Chief Technology Officer, said: "The new online licensing system will reduce the regulatory burden on 63,000 UK amateur radio users and over 68,000 maritime licensees. The system will make the licensing process faster, easier and cheaper for ships and amateur licensees."

AI S SART PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AGREED

COMSAR has approved draft performance standards for the AIS Search and Rescue Transmitter (AIS-SART). Mark Morgan, of the RNLI, who has been running some trials with the devices, tells us he is impressed with the evaluation. The performance standards and a commentary can be found on the IMO website. Partly it says:

The AIS-SART should be capable of transmitting messages that indicate the position, static and safety information of a unit in distress. The transmitted messages should be compatible with existing AIS installations. The transmitted messages should be recognized and displayed by assisting units in the reception range of AIS-SART.

The AIS-SART should:

- be capable of being easily activated by unskilled personnel;
- be fitted with means to prevent inadvertent activation;
- be equipped with a means which is either visual or audible, or both visual and audible, to indicate correct operation;
- be capable of manual activation and deactivation; provision for automatic activation may be included;
- be capable of withstanding without damage drops from a height of 20 m into water;
- be watertight at a depth of 10 m for at least 5 min;
- maintain water tightness when subjected to a thermal shock of 45°C under specified conditions of immersion;
- be capable of floating (not necessarily in an operating position) if it is not an integral part of the survival craft;
- be equipped with buoyant lanyard, suitable for use as a tether, if it is capable

TECHNICAL UPDATES

To make the Examiners' Panel easy to detach the Technical Updates provided by Steve Brett appear tucked inside the Back Page. TU027, TU029 and TU030 appear in this way. TU028, of historical interest, appears on the AMERC website.

We are grateful to Steve for the efforts he has made on our behalf.

MARITIME MISCELLANY

Here is some important information for examiners and practitioners. The Editor always welcomes tips for this page.

UK MSI

The MCA has announced changes to the UK MSI service, including:

Two additional inshore forecasts and a new forecast area for the Isle of Man.

New condensed one hour schedule to reduce delay in delivery.

New weather information updated every six hours in eight daily broadcasts.

Gale and strong wind warnings and navigational warnings broadcast as HMCG receives them.

Broadcasts made in local time.

The current areas of Colwyn Bay and The Wash will be respectively redefined as Gibraltar Point and Great Orme Head.

As we go to press the best place for fuller information is the press releases section of the MCGA Website:

www.mcga.gov.uk.

LORAN-C

The US Coastguard is consulting on whether to continue with its Loran-C system beyond this year.

The US Department of Transport seeks views on whether GPS is adequate for civil navigation, so rendering redundant Loran-C as a complementary system.

GALILEO

Work has begun in Germany on the construction of one of two planned satellite control centres for the EU Galileo GPS project. The news comes as we hear that the UK government has £21m into the project.

ADRS

The UK Hydrographic Office has launched the Admiralty Digital Radio Signals (ADRS) Volume 6. It can be purchased on disc with two other products (for tides and lights). ADRS Volume 6 is updated weekly and the changes can be downloaded or be found on discs posted out to subscribers.

There are limited details at:

www.hydro.gov.uk.

PERTH LES

The Australian Inmarsat LES at Perth closed in March of this year.

Ships that previously used Perth for submitting (free) AUSREP position reports to AusSAR will now use Station 12 in Holland – station code 212 for the Pacific Ocean Region and station code 312 for the Indian Ocean.

A new special access code 1243 has been introduced for sending free AUSREP reports via Station 12.

MSI broadcasts will not be affected.

HERE & THERE

Some matters we have picked surfing the Internet and reading the technical literature.

CHEATS

Edexcel is considering equipping consignments of examination papers with radio-frequency identity tags (RFID). This is one of the measures the Board is looking at to improve security of documents while in transit.

SATELLITES

Satellite operators SES and Eutelsat are investing in the first European satellite infrastructure for broadcasts to mobile devices and vehicles. The venture will operate in the S-band (2.0 GHz) using the W2A satellite due for launch in 2009.

GRANTS FOR SEAFARERS

The Mars Training Ship Fund, based in Dundee offers grants to 'people of promise' to help them begin their careers in seafaring. The grants are usually for less than £650 p.a.

NautilusUK manages the Slater Fund to assist seafarers who wish to train to become officers. The individual grants can be up to £10,000.

W/T ACT 2006

The UK regulatory body has published details of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006. It replaces six separate Acts dating back to 1949 and the only changes are minor ones from the tidying up.

Aficionados can find the details on www.ofcom.org.uk.

PORT DETENTIONS

The number of foreign-flagged ships checked in the UK last year was 1,660. The MCGA has revealed that nearly one in twenty of these were detained.

AUSTRALIAN GMDSS

An Australian commercial company, Densham & Associates Pty. Ltd., has the GMDSS website www.gmdss.au. It has useful links including one to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) where the closure of the Perth LES is announced.

Densham is currently mentioning that the ITU is about to specify a new MMSI format for SAR aircraft and AIS systems. As soon as we have confirmed information we will let you know.

IAN WAUGH REVISES BOOK

The second edition of the 'Mariner's Guide to Marine Communications' by Ian Waugh is now in print. It updates the earlier edition by adding a chapter on traffic accounting and providing details of FleetBroadband, the AIS-SART, AIS, SSAS and LRIT.

The latest Issue of Seaways, the Journal of the Nautical Institute has an interesting article by Ian on Radio Traffic Accounting based on the chapter in his book.

The book is published by the Nautical Institute and has the ISBN Number 1 870077 784. The cost to non-Members of the Institute is £36.00 stg.

HULL COLLEGE'S EQUIPMENT SALE

We have received the following from Stewart MacMaster, Senior Technician at Hull College. His Contact details are 44(0)1482 329943 or Email: smacmaster@hull-college.ac.uk

The following equipment previously supported our Marine Radio training activities but now these items have become surplus to requirement. Reasonable offers will be considered but all delivery costs must be paid for by the purchaser. These items are offered in good faith.

Terms: Cheque with order. Official Orders accepted from the major colleges only.

ITEM	Price
ICOM HF MARINE TRANSCEIVER IC-M600	£400.00
ICOM RADIO TELEX MODEM IC-TX1	included with above
ICOM HF MARINE TRANSCEIVER IC-M700UK	£400.00
ICOM RADIO TELEX MODEM IC-TX1	included with above
ICOM IC-P530 SYSTEM POWER SUPPLY	£50.00
SAILOR Compact VHF DSC RM2042	£120.00
SAILOR VHF POWER SUPPLY TYPE N1635	included with above
SAILOR Compact VHF DSC RM2042	£120.00
SAILOR VHF POWER SUPPLY TYPE N1635	included with above
SAILOR Compact VHF DSC RE2100	£120.00
SAILOR VHF POWER SUPPLY TYPE N1635	included with above
SAILOR Compact HF SSB DSC WATCH RECEIVER RM2150	£150.00
SAILOR COMPACT HF SSB TELEX / DSC RM2151	£350.00
Ships Electronic services LTD DISCALL 2000 DSC MF/HF CONTROLLER	£200.00
ICS electronics NAV5 GMDSS NAVTEX RECEIVER (1 of 2)	£90.00
ICS electronics NAV5 GMDSS NAVTEX RECEIVER (2 of 2)	£90.00
ICOM IC-M56 VHF MARINE TRANSCEIVER	£60.00
RACAL DANA 9914 VHF frequency counter (1 of 2)	£50.00
RACAL DANA 9914 VHF frequency counter (2 of 2)	£50.00
RACAL RF Millivoltmeter- true RMS 9361a (1 of 2)	£50.00
RACAL RF Millivoltmeter- true RMS 9361a (2 of 2)	£50.00
RACAL MODULATION METER TYPE 9009 (1 of 2)	£50.00
RACAL MODULATION METER TYPE 9009 (2 of 2)	£50.00
AKD WA1 WAVEMETER	£10.00
AKD HF WAVEMETER	£10.00
RS Components SWR and Power meter 204-656	£20.00
Diamond SX-200 SWR and Power meter	£20.00
ICS electronics Weather FAX System FAX-1	£30.00
Kenwood FM DUAL Bander 433 MHz Transceiver TM-G707	£100.00
Danita 240 FM 27MHz CB Transceiver	£5.00

None of this equipment has ever been used for fault-finding practice by students and so should be "as manufactured" internally. Although believed to be working, no warranty or guarantee can be given in any respect. Please telephone or Email for answers to specific enquiries.

AMERC NEWS
SELECTED INDEX

January 2005 - December 2006

TOPIC	DETAIL	AN	DATE	Pp
Aerials	Dangers from lead-ins (MGN 330)	22	Nov 06	8
	Ditto (MGN 303)	20	Feb 06	8
African Centres	MRCC & MRSC established	22	Nov 06	8
AIS	Accuracy of transmission (MIN 231)	21	Jun 06	8
	Carriage requirements (MSN 1795)	21	Jun 06	8
	Double ended ferried (MGN 321)	21	Jun 06	8
	Monitoring coastal shipping – UK	22	Nov 06	13
	Operational guidance (MGN 277)	17	Feb 05	9
	Navigation aids systems	21	Jun 06	10
	RCC Network – UK	19	Oct 05	9
	Small craft Class B (MIN199)	19	Oct 05	7
	UK chain operational	22	Nov 06	8
	VHF use & ITU Regulations (MGN 324)	22	Nov 06	8
AMERC Address	Registered Office in Kendal	21	Jun 06	4
Committees	New Committee & Board structures	22	Nov 06	3
Course Approvals	AMERC provides certificates	22	Nov 06	4
CSOC	Discussions with HMCg	21	Jun 06	7
Examinations	Application Forms – completing	21	Jun 06	5
	Dyslexic Candidates	20	Feb 06	4
	Earlier attempts	21	Jun 06	7
	Payment Methods	21	Jun 06	5
	Payments to NAC – correction	19	Oct 06	6
	Retention of Scripts	20	Feb 06	6
	Scenario based OPT	21	Jun 06	6
Examiners	Active Lists	21	Jun 06	7
	Active Lists	19	Oct 05	6
	Active Lists	17	Feb 05	3
	Handbook 6th Edition	17	Feb 05	3
	Taxation & Insurance	19	Oct 05	10
EPIRB	Registration required (MGN302)	20	Feb 06	8
Expenses	New Claim Form	20	Feb 06	11
ITU WARC	Preparations for 2007 – Kim Fisher	22	Nov 06	11
ITU WARC	Ditto	20	Feb 06	9
INMARSAT	Barring & Safetynet (MGN 305)	20	Feb 06	8

LRC	Class E DSC controllers - examinations	22	Nov 06	5
LRIT	Identities for SAR & security	22	Nov 06	13
Loran C	Trial transmissions from Rugby	19	Oct 05	8
Membership	Red Ensign, RNLI, Kim Holt	21	Jun 06	4
MNTB	GOC approval documentation revisions	22	Nov 06	4
	GMDSS Guideline Revised	21	Jun 06	7
Mobile Phones	Radar interference (MIN 290)	19	Oct 05	7
	Warnings against misuse (MSN 299)	20	Feb 06	7
Pirate Broadcasts	Forbidden (MGN 320)	21	Jun 06	5
Piracy	Alerting by DSC	22	Nov 06	5
	Modern Piracy - W. Williamson	17	Feb 05	7
	Anti-piracy Measures (MGN298)	20	Feb 06	7
Revalidation	Sea-time requirement	22	Nov 06	4
	Ditto	19	Oct 05	6
Revalidation	STW 37	21	Jun 06	7
Radar	Performance standards(MIN 246)	21	Jun 06	7
	Corrigendum (MGN 298)	20	Feb 06	7
	Mobiles' Interference (MIN 290)	19	Oct 05	7
SAR	Signals in distress & SAR (MGN 304)	20	Feb 06	8
Safe Practices	MS Regulations 1998 (MIN 235)	22	Nov 06	8
Security	Ship Security - Phil Davies	22	Nov 06	9
Shore Maintenance	Selenia Contract (MGN292)	19	Oct 05	7
Surveys	Selenia Contacts (MGN 286)	20	Feb 06	7
Training Schemes	Using the VQ route (MGN8)	22	Nov 06	8
Transas	GMDSS Simulator	22	Nov 06	6
Use of Equipment	Maintenance records (MGN 331)	22	Nov 06	8
VDR	Performance Testing (MGN 272)	17	Feb 05	9

NOTES:

- (i) **This is a selective index and only records items to which reference is likely to be needed.**
- (ii) **Quarterly GMDSS Statistics provided by the NAC appear in each Issue.**
- (iii) **A full list of the Technical Update supplements can be found on the AMERC website.**

BACK PAGE

VETERANS' NEWS

The MoD is organising a sunset wreath laying ceremony on 15 June to commemorate the twentyfifth anniversary of the Falklands Conflict. The focus of the event will be the MN Falklands Memorial on Tower Hill, London. As many as 3,000 campaign medals were issued to merchant seamen and it is hoped that a large number will be able to attend the ceremony. Let me know if you or someone you know wants an invitation.

The MoD's qualifying period for the award of the UK Merchant Service Veteran's Badge was initially 1959, to be incremented annually by one year. Seemingly out of the blue the MoD has recently announced that it has raised the end period to 1984. So far nearly five thousand badges have been distributed and I understand that Radio Officers formed a large part of those who have applied. If you think you qualify and want a badge, ask me.

GMDSS - A USER'S HANDBOOK

The third edition of 'GMDSS - A User's Handbook' written by Denise Brehaut has been published by Adlard Coles Nautical. Denise, based at the Warsash Maritime Academy, has updated the earlier editions and has had positive reviews from the technical press – the Nautical Magazine described it as providing 'concise and lucid practical guidance.' The Handbook covers the syllabus requirements of the GOC, ROC and LRC.

The ISBN is 0-7136-7856-9 and it costs £15.99 stg.

AMERC NEWS SUPPLEMENTS

This Issue has three supplements, including the familiar Technical Updates and an Index for 2005 and 2006. Of paramount importance is the Examiners' Panel Supplement. Please ensure that you read and digest it and above all bring it to the Examiners Panel.

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This Newsletter duals as Circular 229. Check you have a full file. All Issues of AMERC NEWS appear on the AMERC Website and back copies of the Circulars may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary. ***Don't forget to distribute copies to your colleagues.***

Articles and suggestions for the next Issue of AMERC NEWS can be sent at any time.

Brian Cotton, Editor.

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EXAMINERS' PANEL SUPPLEMENT

At various Examination Panels, Members have had discussions about the format and content of the Regulations and SOLAS elements of the GMDSS GOC Examination. These discussions have produced some adjustment within the familiar framework although the basic structure and format has seen little change.

At the 2006 Examiner's Panel, Phil Davies of the Lairdside Maritime Centre presented a paper in which he urged some new thinking on the OPT element and this has become known as 'scenario-based assessment.' It found some favour amongst the delegates and it was agreed that a pilot should be devised and tested. It was arranged that this would be carried out at the Warsash Maritime Academy with the results appraised against a control group following the present assessment arrangements. The results from that pilot will be available for discussion at the 2007 Examiners' Panel.

During the earlier discussions about the structure and content of SOLAS and Regulations papers, Willie Williamson had been pressing for new thinking on these also. He presented a paper to the most recent Maritime Consultancy Group and it was agreed that this would be sent out as a supplement to AMERC NEWS. The intention is that Willie Williamson's paper (page sixteen, *et seq*) will be considered in some depth at the Examiners' Panel to be held in May of this year.

Delegates will recognise the importance of the discussions to be held on these two matters. They are urged to read the paper which follows, coming to the Examiners' Panel armed with views and, of course, the paper!

Special Note to Overseas REC

For the most part there will be no overseas delegates at this year's Examiners' Panel. As a consequence the Chief Examiner especially requests that comments on Willie Williamson's paper should be forwarded to him as soon as possible and in any event to be with him no later than 18 May 2007.

INMARSAT A & FLEET 77

Double thinking caps on for the Examiners' Panel agenda! Here is another topic suggested for you by Eric Lamb. "What are the Examiners' thoughts on a date for the implementation of a change-over from Inmarsat A to Inmarsat B/Fleet 77?"

REVI SING THE GMDSS GOC EXAMI NATION

A DI SCUSSI ON PAPER
by
WILLIE WILLIAMSON

Background.

Over the years I have been increasingly disenchanted with the GOC examination, feeling that it is no longer appropriate for purpose. Numerous candidates have told me that of all the examinations they sit for various marine qualifications, the GOC is the most difficult. This is because of the nature of this examination and the way in which it is constructed and presented. The present examination set up seems to put emphasis on memorising various facts that could be easily accessed via official publications. Time spent on emphasising these could be better spent during the course on more important subjects. As an organisation I feel we need to bring the examination questions more into line with the reality candidates will face at sea.

New system needs to be devised.

On this important issue I think a much simpler system needs to be introduced. At present there is too much overlap between the four examination sections.

Timings.

Presently there are anomalies in the time limits for three of the examination sections. Many students and particularly foreign students struggle to complete the SOLAS paper in the 15 minutes allowed for this section.

Conversely 15 minutes for Regulations and General Knowledge now appears to be too long. Most candidates finish this section within a few minutes.

For OPT 90 minutes is allowed at present. However due to various changes made to this section of the examination over a number of years the majority of candidates complete this section well within this time limit.

SOLAS marking scheme.

Although we are regularly told at AGMs that the examiner has a degree of leeway in interpreting a candidate's answers; in reality the Quality Assurance measures of rigid model answers to SOLAS questions belies this. Candidates can give perfectly acceptable answers but because they do not follow the form of the model answer, they cannot be given marks.

Subject content for SOLAS questions.

In OPT, the candidate is asked to demonstrate competence on Sat-C quite extensively, so why have Sat-C distress questions in SOLAS?

Why are questions on special access code for ship position reports (43) included in SOLAS? See Q4 (d) of paper 53 (2005/07). This could be looked up in official publications/operating manuals/on the equipment itself.

Is there any merit in candidates knowing the frequency SAR aircraft use to home in on COSPAS-SARSAT EPIRBs when they have no control over it? See Q4 (c) of paper 54 (2005/07) or Q4 (d) of paper 57 (2005/07).

Similarly why do candidates need to know the frequency of a SART? See Q4 (a) of paper 55 (2005/07).

A Regulations question asks the candidate to know 2177 kHz is the DSC frequency for routine ship-to-ship calls. However we tell the candidate this information in the OPT question 19.

Regulations and General Knowledge

15 minutes for this part of the examination is excessive. I think a case can be made for removing this section from the examination.

With 15 questions on each Regulations paper and having to produce 5 papers for each examination series it is inevitable that some poor questions have to be included. I know we are including questions simply because we need to make up the magic number of 15.

With satellite systems there are no "Regulations" as such which means we have to fall back on asking questions about DSC and RT and the numbers of questions that can be asked on this topic are limited.

RT Exercise.

Very unrealistic but I find it difficult to suggest a way of improving this although see below.

OPT.

I am aware that the "scenario" based OPT, as suggested by Phil Davies at last year's Examiners' Panel is currently being tested at Warsash. I believe scenario based OPT is the way to go in the future.

New system.

Suggested options include.

Going over to a practical examination based on scenario type questions that would also include an RT exercise.

Alternatively.

SOLAS.

Retain the written format as at present but reduce the number of “long” questions to two per paper. A third question of five sections with 2 marks each to include things like Mayday, Pan Pan, Saycuretay, Seelonce Mayday, Seelonce Distress and Seelonce Feenee would be sufficient for the “short questions.” The possibility of using multi choice for these short questions should be considered. All this could be presented as Part I of the SOLAS examination.

Part II of this examination would include a number of multi-choice General Knowledge questions. I suggest that there should be 10 questions in this new section and candidates would need to score 6/10 to pass, i.e. 60% as at present.

Content of the suggested new General Knowledge questions should be limited to:

GMDSS Sea Areas

Identification of stations (MMSI, IMN, call-signs etc)

Battery maintenance and related safety issues

Aerial maintenance and related safety issues

Propagation

The time limit for the SOLAS examination would be 30 minutes. It would be for the candidate to decide how long should be spent on each question but candidates would have to pass both parts of the SOLAS examination. This suggested system would bring the GOC examination into line with the ROC.

I would further suggest that the GOC examination contain an element of in-course assessment of a candidate’s ability. (25% or 50% perhaps).

At present candidates have to look up ITU books and ALRS as part of OPT, so why ask questions relating to these books in the Regulations?

Also questions are asked about testing in the Regulations papers but this is well covered in OPT.

Similarly why do candidates need to memorise telex special access codes when this information is readily available in the official publications? If the general feeling is that these codes are so important why can it not be incorporated into OPT as a specific question? For example: Look up the telex special access code for ship position reports.

In OPT operation 38 asks candidates to demonstrate the procedures to cancel the transmission of a false Distress Alert on the Sat-C. Why do we need to ask this question in the Regulations paper?

Why do candidates need to memorise what is in each section of the GMDSS logbook simply to be able to answer questions in the Regulations paper. Surely such questions are irrelevant for the operator can simply look this up in the log if he wants to know.

Therefore I suggest that as part of the examination for the new RT, the candidates are given photocopies of GMDSS log and they have to fill in ships name, official number etc in more detail than in the present examination. This would give a bit more realism although I recognise that this would involve additional work in preparing examination scripts. Also in the RT examination the position of ships acknowledging the distress should be given in latitude and longitude. This would bring it into line with what actually happens at sea where navigators simply read off their current position from the GPS.

OPT

I suggest a move to a scenario based structure as per Phil Davies's proposition at last year's Examination Panel and currently undergoing trial. However some of the questions currently in Regulations relating to ITU books, ALRS etc could be examined in this part of the examination without much difficulty. While 60 questions on OPT is desirable there is no reason why this number could not be exceeded to include finding information from official publications.

Conclusion

The present structure of the GOC examinations has been in place since the introduction of GMDSS. Apart from some minor tinkering with some topic areas there have been no major changes made to the examinations. Although it has served us well in the past I believe that the present structure does not represent the realities that the candidates will face when they are at sea. I hope that my paper will stimulate discussion at the Examiners' Panel and lead to implementation of what I believe would be a more rational system than we have at present.

W.G. Williamson

Question 3. State the RT (voice) signals to be used under the following circumstances.	MARKS
a) By the controlling station in a distress situation to impose silence on a station causing interference to distress traffic. SEELONCE MAYDAY	2
b) To announce an important meteorological warning is to follow. SAYCURETAY	2
c) To request medical advice from a coast station. PAN-PAN	2
d) By a station, other than the controlling station, to impose silence on a station causing interference to distress traffic. SEELONCE DISTRESS	2
e) By a station controlling distress working to announce that the distress situation is over, and that normal working may resume. SEELONCE FEENEE	2

SUGGESTED SOLAS EXAMINATION
Part II
Multi-choice Questions

Q1. GMDSS Sea Area A1 is defined as being an area within:

- a) approximately 100 to 150 miles from the coast
- b) R/T range of at least one shore station having continuous VHF DSC alerting
Correct
- c) R/T range of at least one shore station having continuous MF DSC alerting
- d) range of the Inmarsat system

Q2. GMDSS Sea Area A2 is defined as being an area within:

- a) range of at least one shore station having continuous VHF DSC alerting
- b) range of at least one shore station having continuous MF DSC alerting
Correct
- c) continuous range of NAVTEX transmissions
- d) approximately 100 to 175 miles from the coast

Q3. An example of Inmarsat F 77 number of a ship station is:

- a) 419234567
- b) 324567895
- c) 002192000
- d) 763456789
Correct

Q4. An example of the MMS1 number for a group of ships is:

- a) 323254321
- b) 002321235
- c) 023212345
Correct
- d) 623212345

Q5. The electrolyte of a lead acid battery is:

- a) dilute sulphuric acid
Correct
- b) dilute hydrochloric acid
- c) concentrated sulphuric acid
- d) concentrated hydrochloric acid

Q6. When maintaining lead acid batteries, protective clothing should be worn because of the:

- a) corrosive electrolyte which is used
- b) risk of electric shock
- c) volatile gasses which are emitted
- d) exposed location of the battery compartment

Correct

Q7. An isolated aerial can also be described as:

- a) a loaded antenna
- b) an earthed aerial
- c) a grounded aerial
- d) an open aerial

Correct

Q8. The antenna used by an Inmarsat F 77 is:

- a) omnidirectional
- b) directional
- c) whip
- d) long-wire

Correct

Q9. A safety precaution when working aloft near a transmitter aerial, the aerial should be connected to:

- a) the transmitter (low power) and tuned to 2187.5 kHz
- b) the transmitter on standby for testing
- c) the transmitter (low power) and tuned to 2182 kHz
- d) earth as a safety precaution

Correct

Q10. Line-of-sight propagation would mainly involve:

- a) communications on HF
- b) communications on MF
- c) Navtex communications
- d) SART, EPIRB, INMARSAT communications

Correct