

AMERC NEWS

Incorporates Circular 234

April 2008

ISSUE TWENTY-SEVEN - READ INSIDE

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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.
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EDITORIAL

There I was worrying that with this edition following so quickly on the last that I would end up with a couple of pages and here we have the biggest ever. I have even had to hold over two items until the next issue. But there are greater reasons for the bumper edition than the vanity of your Editor and I shall come to these shortly. First, though, let me remind you that our Hon Secretary is in no position to lug extra copies of AMERC NEWS and the AGM papers around the airports. That blue pile you have seen every year on the table at the front will not be there this year. We do say in each Issue that 'AMERC Ltd. encourages the copying and wider distribution of AMERC NEWS' but I suppose we should be using the verb expects rather than encourages. So over to you to copy on for your colleagues and just as importantly to garner their views.

It might help if AMERC NEWS can be uploaded to the AMERC Website in due time. All is new there as Kevin Walsh describes in his article on page 6. Kevin and his professional colleagues have produced a site that is pleasing to the eye and easy to navigate. It is also focused more to prospective students and their employers than in the recent past. Thought has also gone into staff use with an Examiners' forum and from my point of view, I shall be able to upload the NEWS without having to go through intermediary steps. This will make for some saving of time although I shall have to complete my apprenticeship first.

The Examiners' Panel held at AGM is always a forum for the discussion of ideas and has driven many of the Association's developments over time. This is one of those years where the content of the examinations for the next series will be determined. In addition it promises to be one of the most critical because we may see radical change to the examination structure. As I say in my introduction on page 12 the momentum for change to the GOC examination structure has been building for two years. The results of the scenario-based OPT examination trials will be put before the Panel and that will be interesting. But it may be that Willie Williamson and others, including Ian Waugh, have captured a mood for change in the written examinations which will run as strongly as the scenario based OPT did two years ago. That is why it is important for you to be there, to comment then and beforehand, and to bring the papers. After all if changes are agreed at this Panel, it will be you that will have to implement them. Your voice is needed!

Looking forward to renewing old friendships next month.

Brian Cotton
Editor

STOP PRESS

As we go to press we have received a communication from Paul Martin:

'Has anyone got an old 500 kHz transmitter lying around that they don't want? Specifically a reserve or emergency TX such as a Marconi Salvor or similar or failing that a Lifeboat TX with 5 tons. If so and I can have it then I promise it will be used again on 500 kHz CW as soon as I can get my antenna up.'

Contact Paul Martin via: www.gmdss.biz.

AGM REMINDERS

CIRCULAR 233

The Hon. Secretary has the duty to publish information, directives and legal notices from time to time. These appear as AMERC Circulars and are sent to you directly. Although separately published, AMERC NEWS is also a Circular. This edition is Circular 234.

By now you should have received Circular 233, which said:

'Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the company will be held at the Park Hotel S. Michele, Martina Franca, Puglia, Italy on Thursday 22nd May 2008. All posts on the Executive Committee and that of the GMDSS Chief examiner are subject to re-election and nominations for these posts should be forwarded to the Honorary Secretary 28 days before the AGM, duly proposed and seconded.'

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE HON SECRETARY

So we meet in Italy for the AGM and that all important Examiners' Panel. Most of us, including the Hon. Secretary, will be limited in what we can carry in our luggage. Normally Keith is able to bring extra copies of AGM and Examiners' Panel papers. **THIS WILL NOT BE THE CASE THIS YEAR.** Centres must take responsibility to see that all their delegates have a full set of papers. To assist in this, the Hon. Secretary will be posting out extra copies.

MARITIME CONSULTANCY GROUP (MCG)

The MCG met in Kendal in mid March and considered its usual mix of operational matters. Here is a report of some of those discussed at the meeting which may merit your attention or action

EXAMINERS' HANDBOOK

Members of the MCG have completed their examinations of the Seventh Edition (2008) of the Examination Administration Handbook. You will receive your copy of the definitive version on disc at the 2008 AGM.

It is also made available on the AMERC Website.

EXAMINATIONS & FEES

Proposals to raise the fees charged for GMDSS Examinations have been put to the MCA for approval. If that approval is given, the new fees will apply from 01 January 2009.

The Executive Committee has placed importance on the fact that this increase, if approved, will be reflected in the Examiners' fees.

An announcement on progress is expected at AGM.

The MCA has agreed to look at the matter of VAT rating of GMDSS examination fees.

ROGER TOWNER

Roger Towner has been appointed Head of Seafarer Services & Ship Registration at the MCA and is no longer Chief Examiner.

AMERC WEBSITE

The proposed final version of the revised AMERC Website was demonstrated to the Executive Committee by Kevin Walsh.

The format and its features were approved and the new site is now in being. Kevin Walsh has provided an explanatory article for this Issue of AMERC NEWS and you can find it on Page 5.

TRANSAS TGS4100 GMDSS SIMULATOR

Some centres have reported issues in respect of using the Transas TGS4100 Simulator. The MCG encourages centres to ensure that staff be given sufficient familiarisation time after installation of a simulator.

The Hon. Secretary is writing to Transas to ask that the company ensures that all centres have the same features in their installations and are provided with adequate operators' manuals.

SHIP INSPECTION

The Chief Examiner has been at a seminar in Brussels dealing with inspection of ships' GMDSS installations.

A report will appear in a future Issue.

M-NOTICES

The following M-Notices appear to have some relevance to Members. The full list of the current M-notices appear on the MCA website (www.mcga.gov.uk) to which reference should be made from time to time. Seemingly a number of these M-notices are of significance to national and international Members of AMERC. The MCA website has been revised and is now easier to use as well as being more visually appealing.

MIN 312 (M+F) SHIPBOARD MANUALS*

This Information Note stresses the need for shipboard technical and operating manuals to be up to date, accurate and user friendly.

November 2007

MGN 361 121.5/243 MHz EPIRB

This Guidance Note reminds seafarers that the processing of 121.5 MHz and 243 MHz EPIRB signals will cease on 01 February 2009. The primary use of initial emergency alerting will move to 406 MHz beacons.

The Note also gives guidance on disposal of lithium batteries in EPIRB devices.

March 2008.

MIN 320 (M+F) RESCUE SIGNAL TABLES

This Information Note replaces MSN 1392. The Note advises that SOLAS V requires the Officer of the Watch to have available a Table of International Life-Saving Signals.

Posters displaying the Signals may be obtained from The Stationery Office.

January 2008.

MIN 321 (M+F) NON SOLAS AIS

This Information Note comments that numbers of non-SOLAS vessels, including leisure craft, are wishing to take advantage of the AIS system.

The Note and its Annex advise how the transponders should be coded for such vessels.

January 2008

MIN 316 (M+F) ECDIS SOFTWARE

This Information Note refers to a recent IMO Safety of Navigation Circular which stresses the importance of proper ECDIS software maintenance.

It also warns that ECDIS which has not been updated to the latest versions of IHO standards may not meet the latest carriage requirements.

December 2007

****Editor's Note:***

As we go to press we hear of a project called Shipdex which is a new initiative to make ship manuals available electronically. It is to be introduced at a conference in Hamburg in May and we hope to report on it in due course.

THE NEW AMERC WEBSITE

A Description by Kevin Walsh

The Association is grateful to Kevin Walsh and colleagues at Southampton Solent University for the effort they have put into revising the AMERC Website. We now have Web pages that have been expertly designed to have good visual appearance and accessibility. Measures to make the content more meaningful have been incorporated. Kevin has reported each step in the design and implementation processes to which the Executive Committee has given approval.

Kevin writes.....

The AMERC website has recently been redesigned to better reflect the structure and focus of the Association. The new site has been organised to address the needs of three audience groups – potential students, potential new AMERC members and GMDSS examiners. Potential students can find course providers and also easily access important information on GMDSS certification and examinations. External visitors can quickly see what the Association is about, see the extent of the existing membership and access the Association’s circulars. Examiners now have a password protected forum and access to contact details for other examiners.

Features of the new site are:

Navigation

A clear and simple navigation system is used with large buttons down the left side and breadcrumbs across the top (beneath the logo), giving users a clear indication of their locations in the site

Search

The site now incorporates a search facility. The search uses a customised version of the well known Google search engine technology. To improve relevance, the search only returns hits from within the AMERC site. As well as searching the site’s pages, the search is also able seek information within the AMERC News and Technical Update documents held on the site.

FAQ

The new site contains an FAQ section designed to answer many of the questions that course providers and examination centres get asked over and over again by potential students. (Centres are encouraged to contact us with any additional FAQ’s they would like to have included).

Maps

A new feature of the site is the integration of location mapping. AMERC Members and course providers are shown on maps within the site with their location indicated by a marker. Clicking the marker within a map brings up the name of the centre and a link to their website. As well as being able to zoom in to street level, users can switch between a traditional map display, satellite view or combination of both.

THE NEW AMERC WEBSITE (2)

RSS

The site incorporates RSS (Really Simple Syndication) which is a news feed technology. Users employing up-to-date browsers who click on the RSS link (either in the address bar of their browser or on the RSS logo at the top of the Newsletter page) can subscribe to a feed which is linked to AMERC News issues held on the site. In this way they can easily check if a new issue has been put online and get single-click access to older issues.

Forum

The examiners forum is another new feature of the site. The forum can only be accessed by GMDSS examiners who have logged into the site. The forum offers the potential for examiners to exchange concepts and ideas relating to GMDSS examinations. The forum also incorporates a polling facility where a member can pose a question and other examiners vote on given options.

Data Protection

Once logged in as an examiner, you can gain access to an examiner area that gives contact details for all other AMERC examiners worldwide. If you **DO NOT WISH** your contact details to be available to other AMERC examiners within this password protected area (accessible only by other examiners), you **MUST** contact AMERC to have your details **EXCLUDED** – see below. The information displayed is limited to name, address of the REC or centre you are linked to, phone, mobile, fax and email (where these details are known). REC co-ordinators are asked to bring this information to the attention of all examiners under their jurisdiction.

If you wish to be excluded, please send an email to admin@amerc.ac.uk stating that you wish to opt out. Please ensure your email includes sufficient detail so that you can be correctly identified – at a minimum include your name and REC. Examiners who do not opt out by 1st July 2008 will be assumed to have given consent. If you subsequently change your mind, you can opt in or out at any time by contacting admin@amerc.ac.uk

How do I get a username and password?

Visit www.amerc.ac.uk and click on the Login button to the left of the page. Then click the “*I don't know my password*” link. You will see a Password Reminder form. Enter your email address in the Username field and a password you would like to use in the other two fields. Press the “Reset my password” button. An activation email will be sent to your email address. Follow the instructions in the email to activate your new password.

Finally

The site is not set in stone and we are willing to consider modifications or additions that would improve its usefulness. Also if you notice a problem or inaccuracy in the site, please click on the copyright link (in the page footer) to tell us about it and we will try to fix the problem.

Editor's Note:

All Members will need to access the new website (still at www.amerc.ac.uk) to check their details as well as to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements

MI SCELLANEOUS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF RF WORKERS

Following recommendations of the Health Protection Agency, the University of Birmingham has been funded to provide a National Register of RF Workers. The Register is expected to 'facilitate the determination of whether occupationally there are health effects from exposure to RF fields not observed in the general public.'

So far there are 1100 individuals representing 60 firms registered.

Further details may be had from the Editor.

SPACE BASED AIS

COMDEV International has announced the successful completion of airborne validation trials designed to test the viability of tracking AIS signals from space.

The trials are said to have shown a 'persistent and predictable level of performance.' They showed that the receiver was capable of extracting a significantly greater number of AIS signals compared with a standard receiver.

COMDEV is about to launch a nano-satellite which will be deployed in the first space based validation trial of AIS tracking.

(See AMERC NEWS 24, Page 13 for the USCG announcement on space based AIS).

GREEK AIS

IMIS Hellas has announced the installation of the first private Greek AIS network with national coverage. The network has forty AIS stations and will be used to provide an automated public telephone service for ferries as well as tracking for port and shipping management.

UKHO

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has released an upgraded version of its Admiralty Digital Publications (ADP). This includes compatibility with Windows Vista.

eLORAN

January of this year saw the launch of the UK's enhanced Loran service (eLoran). It is being provided by the General Lighthouse Authorities of the UK and Ireland (GLA).

The new station in Cumbria is integrated with the European network controlled from Brest. The network now extends into the Atlantic as far as Iceland. It is designed to provide a reliable back-up to GPS systems.

ETO AWARD

We hear that ETO Jenny Hibbert has been awarded the MCA annual officer trainee of the year award. Jenny is employed by Sealion Shipping and had undergone training at the Warsash Maritime Academy.

AMERC NEWS
SELECTED INDEX
(Updated each Issue)

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TOPIC	DETAIL	AN	DATE	Pp
Admiralty	Charts to common datum (MIN 272)	24	Jul 07	13
ADRS	Admiralty Digital Radio Signals Vol 6	23	Mar 7	9
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
	Capetown MRCC operational	24	Jul 07	12
AIS	Accuracy of Transmission (MIN 290)	25	Nov 07	7
	Accuracy of transmission (MIN 231)	21	Jun 06	8
	Carriage requirements (MSN 1795)	21	Jun 06	8
	Class B UK trails (MIN 268)	23	Mar 07	6
	Double ended ferries (MGN 321)	21	Jun 06	8
	Monitoring coastal shipping – UK	22	Nov 06	13
	Navigation aids systems	21	Jun 06	10
	Operational guidance (MGN 277)	17	Feb 05	9
	Performance Standards	23	Mar 07	8
	RCC Network – UK	19	Oct 05	9
	Safety of Navigation (MIN 298)	25	Nov 07	7
	Small craft Class B (MIN 199)	19	Oct 05	7
	UK chain operational	22	Nov 06	8
	UK Third Phase completed	26	Jan 08	7
	USCG space based AIS	24	Jul 07	13
	VHF use & ITU Regulations (MGN 324)	22	Nov 06	8
AMERC Address	Registered Office in Kendal	21	Jun 06	4
	Hon. Secretary address change	24	Jul 07	4
	New NAC Manager: Jackie King	26	Jan 08	6
Committees	New Committee & Board structures	22	Nov 06	3
Course Audit	Chief Examiner to inspect timetable & notes	23	Mar 07	5
Course Approvals	AMERC provides certificates	22	Nov 06	4
CSOC	Discussions with HMCg	21	Jun 06	7
DSC	Test call auto response from USCG	24	Jul 07	13
EPIRB	Non SOLAS vessels (MSN 1810)	24	Jul 07	13
EPIRB	Registration (MSN 1816)	25	Nov 07	6
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Examinations	Appeals on termination flow chart	24	Jul07	5
	Application Forms – completing	21	Jun 06	5
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	Digital Photography allowed	23	Mar 07	4
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	Scenario based OPT trial agreed	21	Jun 06	6
	Scenario-based OPT working party	24	Jul 07	8
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	Access to Chief examiner via REC only	24	Jul 07	7
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	Deputy & assistant Chief Examiner Roles	26	Jan 08	5
	Deputy Chief Examiner appointed	25	Nov 07	4
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	Taxation & Insurance	19	Oct 05	10
EPIRB	Registration (MSN 1816)	25	Nov 07	6
	Registration required (MGN 302)	20	Feb 06	8
	Non SOLAS vessels (MSN 1810)	24	Jul 07	13
Expenses	New Claim Form	25	Nov 07	14
	New Claim Form	20	Feb 06	11
GOC	Proposed revision – Willie Williamson	23	Mar 07	15
	Critique of structure – Willie Williamson	24	Jul 07	9
HMCG	AMERC recognition of CSOC	23	Mar 07	4
	CSOC & RCSOC recognition finalised	24	Jul 07	4
IMO	New GMDSS Manual published	25	Nov 07	18
ITU WARC	Preparations for 2007 – Kim Fisher	20	Feb 06	11
	Ditto	22	Nov 06	11
	Ditto	24	Jul 07	11
	Outcomes & Updates – Kim Fisher	26	Jan 08	8
INMARSAT	Barring & Safetynet (MGN 305)	20	Feb 06	8
Licences	Ofcom reforms to ship radio licences	23	Mar 07	7
LRC	Class E DSC controllers - examinations	22	Nov 06	5
	Conversion from Restricted R/T withdrawn	26	Jan 08	4
LRIT	Identities for SAR and security	22	Nov 06	13
	New SOLAS Regulations January 2008	26	Jan 08	7
	SOLAS Requirements (MIN 302)	25	Nov 07	6
Loran C	Trial transmissions from Rugby	19	Oct 05	8
	USCG Consultation	23	Mar 07	9
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	(Full) THESI, CERNET, Starcenter, UKSA	24	Jul 07	3
	(Full) Western Training Association	24	Jul07	3
	(Ass) Shetland School of Nautical Studies	24	Jul 07	3
	(Ass) TST, Australian Maritime College	24	Jul 07	3
	City College Plymouth (resigned)	24	Jul 07	3
MNTB	GOC approval documentation revisions	22	Nov 06	4
MNTB	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
MSI	Change to UK transmissions	23	Mar 07	9

Navtex	Standard Abbreviations (MIN 265)	23	Mar 07	6
NAVRAS(M)	Use of GMDSS procedures	24	Jul 07	10
OPT	Erratum: only Sat B approved January 2008	25	Nov 07	5
	Sat B or F77 replace Sat A January 2008	24	Jul 07	9
Perth LES	Close down	23	Mar 07	9
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 (MGN 298)	20	Feb 06	7
Revalidation	Sea-time requirement	22	Nov 06	4
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Revalidation	Surveyors and pilots	24	Jul 07	10
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	Corrigendum (MGN 298)	20	Feb 06	7
	Mobiles' Interference (MIN 290)	19	Oct 05	7
	Radar Reflectors (MGN 349)	25	Nov 07	6
SAR	Signals in distress & SAR (MGN 304)	20	Feb 06	8
Safe Practices	MS Regulations 1998 (MIN 235)	22	Nov 06	8
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SOLAS	Chapter V amendments (MSN 1812)	23	Mar 07	6
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Surveys	Selenia Contacts (MGN 286)	20	Feb 06	7
	Alternative Compliance	25	Nov 07	7
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Transas	GMDSS Simulator	22	Nov 06	6
	Hard panel needed for Version 4000	24	Jul 07	4
	Live receiver & work station requirements	25	Nov 07	4
Use of Equipment	Maintenance records (MGN 331)	22	Nov 06	8
VDR	Performance Testing (MGN 272)	17	Feb 05	9
Website	Ideas needed	24	Jul 07	12
W/T Act 2006	Consolidation of Acts post-1949	23	Mar 07	10
Yacht Officers	Deck Officer CoC (MSN 1892)	23	Mar 07	6

NOTES:

- (i) **This is a selective index and only records items to which reference is likely to be needed. It is updated with each Issue of AMERC NEWS.**
- (ii) **Issues 17 onwards are in pdf format and are fully searchable.**
- (iii) **Quarterly GMDSS Statistics provided by the NAC appear in AMERC NEWS.**
- (iv) **Technical Update supplements in pdf format together with an index can be found on the AMERC Website: www.amerc.ac.uk.**

EXAMINERS' PANEL DEBATE The GOC Examination Structure

FOR YOUR URGENT ATTENTION

Reform of GOC examinations has been on the Association's agenda for the past two years. It was at the Examiners' Panel held at the 2006 AGM that Phil Davies, of the Lairdside Maritime Centre, introduced the concept of a 'scenario-based OPT examination' (see AMERC NEWS 21, page 6). It was agreed that an independent evaluation should be undertaken at the Warsash Maritime Academy and the results of this were presented at the Examiners' Panel in 2007. At that meeting it was agreed that further trials should be conducted and the results reported at the 2008 AGM.

At the 2007 Panel Willie Williamson, of the Lairdside Maritime Centre and Chairman of AMERC's Regulations Panel, presented a critique of the GOC Examination Structure (see AMERC NEWS 24, page 9). In his paper he argued that there were overlaps in all sections of the GOC examination. The paper found favour with the delegates and it was agreed that Willie should do further work. He was also required to consult and to report regularly to the MCG. Other members were given the opportunity to comment as they felt fit.

Time will be made available at AGM and the Examiners' Panel for discussions on possible changes to the GOC Examination structure. Although there will be interaction between the scenario-based arrangements and the written papers, it is convenient to think of them separately at this stage.

AMERC NEWS has received two papers that will guide discussion on the format structure and content of the written examinations. Both of these papers and their annexes are incorporated in this edition.

In what we hope is a helpful move we have placed a paper by Willie Williamson and another by Ian Waugh following this page since they should be considered together. The specimen examination papers prepared by Willie and Ian appear subsequently in effect as appendices to the news pages. They are identified as a series: starting with A1 for Willie Williamson's and B1 for Ian's. The authors wish to stress that it is not the content of the questions and answers that is up for debate but *the format*.

We hope this is helpful and we look forward to hearing the debate.

The Chief Examiner will chair that debate and has asked that Members ensure that they read these documents. He would like comments to him in advance, and no later than 09 May to help guide the discussions.

REVISING THE GOC EXAMINATION
A Discussion Paper
by
Willie Williamson

PLEASE REFER TO THE COMMENTS ON P12

We publish below a paper by Willie Williamson which was considered by the MCG at its last meeting. It was decided that opportunity for further discussion of the paper would be created at the Examiners' Panel. Eric Lamb has therefore asked that these proposals be considered by REC and comments be fed back to him by 9th May at the latest. This will give time for further reflection by the MCG prior to the meeting and its discussions.

Willie writes:

Background.

Following the 2007 Examiners Panel Meeting held in the Springfield Hotel Gateshead, the majority of examiners present indicated that the existing **GOC** examination structure required amending. Exactly what format was to replace the existing structure with was **NOT** decided and this was left in abeyance.

New system needs to be devised.

As the next set of examination papers will come into force on 1st January 2009, it is important that changes to the GOC examination structure should be investigated now, giving time for them to be discussed and implemented at the 2008 AGM.

Suggestions for change

As a way forward, I would like to propose the following.

To simplify paperwork, the current 15 minutes Regulations paper should be abandoned. Aspects of Regulations could be incorporated into a combined SOLAS/Regulations paper which I suggest calling GMDSS General Knowledge. An advantage would be less paperwork for examiners in as well as giving rise to a wider question base.

GMDSS General Knowledge

This paper would be similar to the existing SOLAS paper with one exception. Marks allocated to existing SOLAS Question 4 would be revised to carry **ONE** mark each. An additional five multi choice Regulations type questions, each carrying one mark, would be included. This would retain the total marks available at 40 as at present. Candidates would require 30/40 marks to pass this paper. Provisionally, a time limit of 30 minutes would be allowed for this part of the examination.

REVISING THE GOC EXAMINATION (2)

The five multi-choice questions would be on the following subjects.

GMDSS Sea Areas
Battery maintenance and related safety issues
Aerial maintenance and related safety issues
Propagation.

Some of the topics currently in Regulations papers have been or could be transferred to the scenario based OPT making for a more meaningful and realistic examination.

For example, the identification of stations (MMSI, IMN, call-signs etc) could be a question transferred into OPT:

i.e. *'Using the correct documents find the Sat-B number for (Name of vessel)'.*

Questions relating to satellite two digit or short codes could be handled in a similar manner:

i.e. *Using the correct documents find the correct two digit code for (Insert medical advice, medical assistance, maritime assistance etc).*

R/T Exercise

The format as currently exists should be retained. However, to improve aspects of the CEPT syllabus relating to log keeping, examination candidates should be given an additional sheet of paper. This would be an amended version of Section A of the GMDSS Log.

Information relating to the ships IMO number, Port of Registry and whether DOE, SBM or ASM is the mode used to ensure availability of equipment, will be given in the candidate's instruction sheet. The candidate would be expected to fill in these details into Section A of the Log. The current allocation of marks would have to be adjusted accordingly. (See attached specimen page of the Log).

OPT

Discussions and trials of the "scenario based OPT" are ongoing. The results of such tests will be considered at the Examiners Panel to be held at the AGM in May 2008. The outcomes of those trials will bear upon and may strengthen the views expressed in this paper

IAMSAR manual

Knowledge of the IAMSAR manual is part of the CEPT syllabus, and Regulation 21 of SOLAS Chapter V requires all ships to carry Volume III of that Manual, with some exceptions.

REVISI NG THE GOC EXAMI NATI ONS (3)

In reality, with the exception of asking what the term On Scene Coordinator means, **NO** questions relating to radio operating procedures outlined in the manual have ever featured in GMDSS GOC exams. To broaden the range of SOLAS type questions in the GOC examination, the inclusion of questions relating to information taken from the IAMSAR manual is recommended.

Specimen paper

A specimen paper reflecting the proposed changes outlined above is incorporated in this edition of AMERC NEWS to illustrate the type of layout of the proposed new examination format.

Feedback

It would be useful to have some reaction to the proposed changes prior to the AGM in May. In particular Members should consider the GMDSS General Knowledge format.

Is a mixture of written and multi-choice questions acceptable?

Does 30 minutes for this paper seem to long or too short? (Perhaps two written questions and extra multi-choice questions would be more desirable).

Any suggestions for improving the format of the existing GOC Examination are to be welcomed. This will give a better idea of how the Examination could be improved. This is the objective we voted for at the Examiners Panel held in Gateshead in 2007.

Please note that the questions in the specimen paper are only suggestions and generally taken from previous examinations. Wording of questions should not be challenged at this stage, as it is the structure of the examination that requires comment. Once the new examination format has been decided, the details of the individual questions can be debated at the Examination Panel in the usual manner

Editor's Note

Willie's proposals for the revised structures appear at Annex A1 – A6. Please note that it is not the content of the questions and answers that is for debate but the structures and formats.

SOLAS & REGULATIONS EXAMINATIONS

Revising the GOC Question & Answer Structure A Discussion Paper

by
Ian Waugh

PLEASE REFER TO THE COMMENTS ON PAGE 12

This is one of two papers that the MCG has decided should be put before Members in advance of the Examiners' Panel since it was decided that opportunity for further discussion of the paper would be created at that Panel.

Eric Lamb, who will chair the Panel, has therefore asked that these proposals be considered by REC and to have comments fed back to him by 9th May at the latest. This will give time for further reflection by the MCG prior to the meeting and its discussions.

Ian writes:

Perceived Concerns:

- (i) Time constraint for SOLAS as against Regulation papers.
- (ii) Some SOLAS answers have to be truncated because of the 10-mark limitation, causing unnecessary confusion for candidates (e.g. *we ask for the 'message' only for Satcom voice questions - when candidates [think they] know that they should send a call and message*);

Others assume one specific outcome (e.g. *all questions involving receiving DSC Distress Alerts assume 'no RCC/no contact'*) – although other valid outcomes may fit the question. Problem? We have to 'teach to the exam', which lowers the credibility of our training and examination system.

- (iii) Some (a few only!) Regulations questions give little or no value to the learning process (e.g. – is there any benefit to a candidate in knowing that the Cospas-Sarsat ground station is called an 'LUT' - as opposed to knowing that they can check the internal condition of the radio-station batteries by 'observing the voltmeter with the battery-charger off'?)

SOLAS & REGULATIONS EXAMINATIONS (2)

Revising the GOC Examination Structure

Suggested Solutions:

- (i) We could (as Willie Williamson suggests) combine 3 SOLAS questions as Part A of a revised paper, with Part-B comprising multi-choice questions and allow (thirty?) minutes for the complete paper;
- (ii) We could expand the SOLAS questions to cater for 15 marks, allowing for more complete answers (examples attached). If we then follow Willie's suggestion for a combined question paper, Part B of the combined paper would have 15 multi-choice questions;
- (iii) We could review our current and past bank of Multi-choice questions to identify those that focus on the more important/likely requirements of the Deck/Engineer Officer requirement for using and maintaining their GMDSS radio equipment, and the associated operating procedures – introducing new questions to cater for any perceived gaps (including questions to cover those points currently asked as SOLAS Q4).

Finally:

If we come up with a complete and credible set of 'situations' for our expanded SOLAS question bank (*noting that most of the current questions and answers are already fully credible*) - and an appropriate bank of Regulations questions and answers - then there's no reason why those questions (*without revealing which are in the current set of exam papers, and without publishing the marking structure*) - should not be put into the public domain.

DSC Alerting and subsequent voice procedures for Mayday, Pan Pan and Sécurité messages; and how to react when you receive such; satcom emergency procedures; and our interpretation of the radio regulations - should not have to be kept 'secret' because we don't have (complete) confidence in our examination structure?

Editor's Note

Ian's proposals for the revised structures appear at Annex B1 – B5
Please note that it is not the content of the questions and answers that is for debate but the structures and formats.

BACK PAGE

WHOOOPS, SORRY NAC Manager

We were correct when we said on Page 6 of the last Issue that Jackie King has replaced Sue Jones as the NAC Manager. We were also correct with the contact details. Unfortunately we goofed in the title, calling her Jackie Hobbs. Please note Jackie's correct name is Jackie King. Our apologies to her.

NEW EMAIL ADDRESS AMERC Treasurer

Please note that the Association's Treasurer, known to us hitherto as Julie Oates, has the married name of Mrs. Julie Cartwright. Her new email address as Treasurer is:

juliecartwright@wraycastle.com

Although both email addresses will be operating in parallel for a few months, you should update your records and use the new email address forthwith.

RADIO OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

The AGM of the Radio Officers' Association will be held on Saturday 17 May at the Premier Inn, Old Trafford, Manchester. All ex-Radio Officers and those interested in marine radio are welcome to attend. Details may be had from me.

Nostalgia buffs should have a look at <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=owTO7RAuPmE> for an interesting video on Portisheadradio.

Best Wishes *Brian Cotton*

oo000oo

This Newsletter duals as Circular 234. Check you have a full file. All Issues of AMERC NEWS appear on the AMERC Website and are fully searchable from Issue 22 onwards. Copies of the Circulars may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary. ***Do not 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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AMERC NEWS

Editor: Professor Brian Cotton
AMERC Website: www.amerc.ac.uk

ANNEX TO PAPER ON PAGE 13
 Authored by Willie Williamson

SPECIMEN GMDSS GENERAL KNOWLEDGE PAPER

Question 1). Your vessel, Antrim Sword/LAKJ, is in position 57°54'N 002°24'W in GMDSS Sea Area A1. You have on board a crewman, injured with a broken leg, who requires evacuation. You are steaming towards Aberdeen at 18 knots. The Master instructs you to radio for assistance using VHF PROCEDURES.

- a) State the initial procedure you should follow, including channels.
 b) State, in full, the subsequent RT call and message you should transmit.

Answer a)

Send DSC Urgency Alert to	1 Mark
All Stations	1 Mark
On Ch 70	1 Mark
Indicating Ch 16 follow up	1 Mark

Answer b)

Pan Pan (x 3)	2 Marks
All Stations (x 3) this is Viking Sword/LAKJ (x 3)	1 Mark
Position 57°54'N 002°24'W	1 Mark
Have injured crewman on board requiring evacuation	1 Mark
Steaming for Aberdeen at 18 knots OVER	1 Mark

It is acceptable if the candidate has addressed the DSC Alert and RT call to Aberdeen Coastguard.

(Total of 10 Marks for question 1).

Question 2). Your vessel, Alyth/MJDQ Inmarsat-C number 423497540, is in GMDSS Sea Area A3. An unknown vessel has been sighted firing distress flares in position 42°15'N 030°08'W. You have been unable to establish contact with the vessel. Your vessel is proceeding to investigate, ETA 1530 UTC. The Master instructs you to advise a Netherlands MRCC using Inmarsat-C Equipment.

- a) State the Inmarsat-C procedure for contacting Netherlands MRCC.
 b) State, in full, the message you should transmit.

Answer a)

Transmit Distress Priority message	2 Marks
To Burum LES (or Netherlands LES)	1 Mark

Answer b)

Mayday	1 Mark
Unknown vessel	1 Mark

In position 42°15'N 030°08'W.	1 Mark
Firing distress flares	1 Mark
Alyth/MJDQ unable to establish contact	1 Mark
Proceeding to investigate	1 Mark
ETA 1530 UTC OVER	1 Mark

(Total of 10 Marks for question 2).

Question 3). Your vessel, Stenna Seaweed/GWEE/232542000, is engaged in diving operations 9 miles northeast of the North Hinder racon buoy. At 1630 UTC, the Master instructs you to transmit a navigation warning to advise other vessels to keep a wide berth.

a) State the initial MF PROCEDURE, including frequencies, you should follow.

Answer a)

Send DSC Safety Alert to	1 Mark
All Stations	1 Mark
On 2187.5 kHz	1 Mark
Indicating follow up on 2182 kHz	1 Mark

b) State, in full, the subsequent call and message you should transmit by RT.

Answer b)

Securite (x 3)	1 Mark
All Stations (x 3) this is Stenna Seaweed (x 3)	1 Mark
(Securite) Navigation Warning at xx1630 UTC	1 Mark
Stenna Seaweed/GWEE/232542000, carrying out diving operations	1 Mark
In position 9 miles northeast of the North Hinder racon buoy	1 Mark
Wide berth requested OUT	1 Mark

(Total of 10 Marks for question 3).

Question 4.

a) Is the Master of a GMDSS equipped ship under obligation to assist other vessels in distress?

Answer. Yes. 1 Mark

b) State the RT signal used by a control station to advise that a distress has ended and normal working may resume.

Answer.
SEELONCE FEENEE 1 Mark

c) Is the carriage of Volume III of the IAMSAR manual Mandatory on a GMDSS equipped vessel?

Answer
Yes. 1 Mark

State the RT signal used by a NON CONTROL station to silence interfering station during distress working

Answer.

SEELONCE DISTRESS

1 Mark

d) State the use of 518 kHz

Answer.

NAVTEX

1 Mark

(5 Marks for question 4).

Q5. 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

Q6. A full specific gravity check of a lead acid battery should be carried out:

- a) monthly **Correct**
- b) weekly
- c) daily
- d) once per international voyage

Q7. The function of an MRCC within GMDSS is to provide a:

- a) communication control function for LESs within the Inmarsat system
- b) communication control function for LUT's within the COSPAS-SARSAT
- c) co-ordination role for search and rescue operations **Correct**
- d) co-ordination role to provide public correspondence service to ships

Q8. A suitable aerial for a ship's VHF radio would be a:

- a) Long wire antenna
- b) 1 to 3 metre whip **Correct**
- c) Simple monopole
- d) 6 to 9 metre whip

Q9. The main propagation path for an 8 MHz radio wave is:

- a) Sky wave **Correct**
- b) Direct wave
- c) Space wave
- d) Ground wave

Questions 5 – 9 carry 1 mark each. Total marks for paper = 40 Need 30/40 to pass as at present.

2007 NEW RT EXAM

Vessel in distress is in position 26° 19' North 049° 08' West. In this position the vessel is approximately 900 miles from the nearest land. (Margarethe Fighter/TOEM) MMSI 239754190)

Rescue ship 1.

Arctic Sunrise/PCTK

MMSI 244538000

Port of Registry: Rotterdam, Holland

IMO 7382902

SBM. Operating Company, Radio Holland

In position 32° 42' North 039° 06' West. I am bearing 121° from you, range 176 miles, my speed 12 kts, ETA 14 hours 40 mins.

Rescue ship 2.

Clydenes/LAFF6

MMSI 257621000

Port of Registry: Stavanger, Norway

IMO 9101546

SBM. Operating Company, TSA

In position 22° 50' North 052° 49' West. I am bearing 240° from you range 170 miles, my speed 15 kts, ETA 11 hours 20 mins

Rescue ship 3.

Caledonian Isles/MRAB8

MMSI 232001580

Port of Registry: London UK

IMO 9051284

SBM. Operating Company, SELEK

In position 27° 03' North 048° 56' West. I am bearing 043° from you range 78 miles, my speed 10 kts, ETA 8 hours.

Rescue ship 4.

Botnica/OJAK

MMSI 230904000

Port of Registry: Helsinki, Finland

IMO 9165877

SBM. Operating Company, Ship Electronic Services

In position 26° 47' North 047° 44' West. I am bearing 072° from you range 130 miles, my speed 13.5 kts, ETA 9 hours 36 minutes.

Rescue ship 5.

City of Cardiff/MWBY8
MMSI 232002807
Port of Registry: London, UK
IMO 9141754
SBM. Operating Company, Kelvin Hughes

In position 23° 09' North 051° 08' West. I am bearing 196° from you range 193 miles, my speed 20 kts, ETA 9 hours 40 mins.

Rescue ship 6.

Muireag/VQBE3
MMSI 234007463
Port of Registry: Glasgow, UK
IMO 7725362
ASM

In position 28° 22' North 051° 52' West. I am bearing 324° from you range 158 miles, my speed 18 kts, ETA 8 hours 40 mins.

Rescue ship 7.

Global Freighter/OJLB
MMSI 230959000
Port of Registry: Vaasa, Finland
IMO 7528568
DOE

In position 26° 07' North 051° 56' West. I am bearing 269° from you range 106 miles, my speed 14.5 kts, ETA 7 hours 20 mins.

Rescue ship 8.

Rheinstal/V2MA5
MMSI 304285000
Port of Registry: St. Johns, Antigua
IMO 9139115
DOE

In position 23° 42' North 049° 14' West. I am bearing 162° from you range 156 miles, my speed 16 kts, ETA 9 hours 45 mins.

GMDSS LOG

Section A

Particulars of ship

1. Name of ship.....

International Call Sign.....

MMSI.....

Port of Registry.....

IMO number.....

2. Indicate method(s) used to ensure availability of radio facilities

a) Duplication of equipment YES.....NO.....

b) Shore-based maintenance YES.....NO.....

Details of service company: Name.....

c) At-sea maintenance capability YES.....NO.....

ANNEX TO PAPER ON PAGE 16

Authored by Ian Waugh

GMDSS GOC – SUGGESTED 15-MARK SOLAS QUESTION & ANSWERS (EXAMPLES)

Q1/2 – Ship in Distress in Sea Area A1/A2

(a) Initial Procedures and (Channels/frequencies)

DSC (1) DISTRESS (2) ALERT CH70/2187.5kHz (1)

Indicating Ch16/2182kHz to follow (1)

(a) Subsequent RT Call and Message?

- 1 Mayday (x3)
- 1 this is Ship Name (x3)
- 1 Mayday
- 1 Ship Name, Callsign and MMSI
- 2 Position
- 1 Nature
- 1 Require Immediate Assistance
- 2 POB

Q3/4 – Receiving DSC Distress Alert on VHF/MF in Sea Area A1/A2

- 2 Set Watch Ch16/2182kHz
- 1 Listen for Mayday Call/Message
- 1 Allow short time (15-20 seconds) for Coast Station/RCC Ack
- 1 If CRS/RCC Ack
- 1 Ack by Voice
- 2 And send Position and ETA *[speed superfluous]*
- 1 Only if able to help [Master's decision]
- 1 If no CRS/RCC Ack
- 2 Ack by voice
- 2 Relay ashore by any appropriate method
- 1 Follow instructions from RCC

[note – 'appropriate method' rather than 'suitable means' is much more easily understood by candidates for whom English is not their first language - but 'means' the same where English is the first language, or where English is a common second language]

Q5/6 – Receiving DSC Distress Alert on VHF/MF in Sea Area A3/A4

- 2 Set Watch Ch16/2182kHz
- 1 Listen for Mayday Call/Message
- 3 Ack by Voice *(no 'immediately' but -2 if 'wait for RCC Ack')*
- 2 send Position and ETA *[speed superfluous]*
- 1 Only if able to help [Master's decision]
- 1 If no contact achieved

- 1 and no other distress traffic heard
- 3 Relay ashore by any appropriate method
- 1 Ack by DSC if Distress Alert repeated

Q7 – Receiving DSC Distress Alert on HF in Sea Area A3/A4 indicating J3E

- 3 Set Watch (HF) Voice Distress Frequency
- 1 Listen for Mayday Call/Message
- 3 Allow 3 minutes for CRS/RCC to ACK
- 2 if no CRS/RCC Ack by voice or DSC
- 1 and casualty fails to make contact with shore [*receiving ship may not receive RCC Ack due to location, but may hear the ship-side of conversation*]
- 3 Relay ashore by any appropriate method
- 2 Follow instructions from RCC

Q8 – Receiving DSC Distress Relay on HF in Sea Area A3/A4 indicating J3E

(a) Initial procedure?

- 2 Set Watch [HF] Voice Distress Frequency
- 1 Listen for Mayday Relay Call/Message
- 1 Ack by voice
- 1 including Position and ETA [*speed superfluous*]
- 1 only if able to help [Master's decision]

(b) You are appointed OSC – MF procedures to contact other vessels?

- 4 DSC DISTRESS RELAY ALL SHIPS 2187.5 kHz
- 1 indicating 2182 kHz to follow

(c) What would be your subsequent voice CALL (message not required)?

- 2 Mayday Relay (x3)
- 1 All Stations (x3) [*recent procedure change written into final GMDSS*]
- 1 this is Ship Name, Callsign and MMSI

Q9/10 – VHF/MF URGENCY situation

(a) Initial procedures?

- DSC (1) ALL SHIPS (1) URGENCY (2) Ch70/2187.5kHz (1)
- Indicating Ch16/2182kHz to follow (1)

(b) Subsequent Voice Call & Message?

- 2 Pan Pan (x3)
- 1 All Stations (x3)
- 1 This is Ship Name, Callsign and MMSI (x3)
- 2 Position
- 2 Problem
- 1 Assistance required

(Over)

Q11/12 – VHF/MF SAFETY situation (Nav Warning)

(a) Initial procedures?

DSC (1) ALL SHIPS (1) SAFETY (2) Ch70/2187.5kHz (1)
 Indicating Ch16/2182kHz to follow (1)

(b) Subsequent Voice Call & Message?

2 Sécurité (x3)
 1 All Stations (x3)
 1 This is Ship Name, Callsign and MMSI (x3)
 1 Navigation Warning date/time
 2 Position
 1 Problem
 1 Danger to Navigation / Please keep a wide berth

(Over)

(Tropical Revolving Storm)

(b) Subsequent Voice Call & Message?

2 Sécurité (x3)
 1 All Stations (x3)
 1 This is ShipName, Callsign and MMSI (x3)
 1 Storm Warning date/time
 2 Position
 1 Tropical Revolving Storm
 1 Heading generally North West

Q13 - Inmarsat-C Distress Situation

(a) Two methods of sending a Distress Alert?

[omit 'initial' – implies DA has to be sent before Distress Message]

Undesignated (1) Distress Button(s) only (1)

Designated (1) Use Distress Menu (1) and select Nature (1) (and LES)

(b) Is it necessary to send a Distress Alert before sending a Distress Message?

No (1)

(c) Show the Distress Message you would type-up for sending?

1 MAYDAY
 1 ShipName and Inmarsat-C ID
 1 Position
 1 Nature
 1 Require Immediate Assistance
 1 POB

(d) What is the procedure for sending the above message, if you have already sent a Distress Alert?

- 1 Enter Transmit/Send Menu
- 1 Select Distress Priority
- 1 Use Same LES as used for Distress Alert (if known)
[if distress alert was Undesignated, LES may not be known – depends on equipment]

Q14 - Inmarsat-C Distress/False Distress Alert Question

Q – Your vessel is in Distress in Sea Area A3

(a) Two methods of sending a Distress Alert using Inmarsat-C?

Undesignated (1) Distress Button(s) only (1)
Designated (1) Use Distress Menu (1) and select Nature (1) (and LES)

(b) Is it necessary to send a Distress Alert before sending a Distress Message?

No (1)

(c) Your vessel has [inadvertently] sent a False Distress Alert using Inmarsat-C. Show the Message you would type-up for sending?

- 1 MAYDAY
- 1 ShipName and Inmarsat-C ID
- 1 Position
- 1 Cancel my False (1) Distress Alert sent at date/time (1)

(d) What is the procedure for sending the above message?

- 1 Enter Transmit/Send Menu
- 1 Select Distress Priority
- 1 Use Same LES as used for Distress Alert (if known)

Q15/16 - Inmarsat B/Fleet 77 [Telephone] Distress Question

(a) How would you make telephone contact with a RCC?

[Sat-B]

[F77]

Lift Telephone Handset (1)
Press Distress Button 6 seconds (2) Press Distress Button 6 seconds
(1) Lift handset when 'phone rings
to connect (1) # to connect

(b) What would be your call and message?

- 2 Mayday (x3)
- 1 RCC (x1)
- 1 This is ShipName (x2) [telephone, so 'good conditions']
- 1 Mayday

- 1 Ship Name, callsign and Inmarsat ID
- 2 Position
- 1 Nature
- 1 Require Immediate Assistance
- 1 POB

Q17 - Inmarsat B Telex Distress Question

(a) How would you make telex contact with an RCC?

- 1 Select Telex
- 1 Distress Priority
- 1 Initiate the call

(b) Show the message you would send

- 1 ShipName, callsign and Inmarsat ID
- 2 Position
- 1 Nature
- 1 Require Immediate Assistance
- 2 POB

(c) How would you then alert ships in your vicinity (MF procedures)

DSC (1) DISTRESS (2) ALERT 2187.5kHz (1)
 Indicating 2182 kHz to follow (1)

Q18/19 - Inmarsat-B/Fleet 77 [Telephone] Urgency (MedEvac) Procedures

(a) Making telephone contact?

- 1 Lift Telephone Handset
- 1 Routine/Urgency priority
- 1 # to connect

(b) call and message?

- 1 Pan Pan (x3)
- 1 RCC ID (x1)
- 1 This is ShipName (x2), callsign, Inmarsat-ID
- 1 Position
- 1 Nature
- 1 Assistance Required
- 1 Steaming for At

(c) Make contact with other (individual) vessel in the vicinity?

DSC (1) URGENCY (1) to 212333000 (1) on (VHF/MF) (1) I
 Indicating Ch16/2182kHz to follow (1)