

IMO Circulars

GUIDANCE ON THE VALIDITY OF RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT INSTALLED AND USED ON SHIPS



Relevant for Owners, Managers, ICS Surveyors & Project Managers

Code: ICS32F029/1

CI -25- 03

The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 109th session (2 to 6 December 2024), approved the guidance set out in the following paragraphs, taking into account concerns over the availability of VHF radio communication equipment compatible with the frequencies and channeling arrangements set out in appendix 18 of the ITU Radio Regulations (RR) – Edition 2020.

This guidance recognizes that incompatibility may exist between VHF radio communication equipment installed on ships and on shore, and the revised frequencies and channeling arrangements in appendix 18 of the RR.

The Table below defines the channel numbering for maritime VHF communications based on 25 kHz channel spacing and use of several duplex channels. The channel numbering and the conversion of two-frequency channels for single-frequency operation shall be in accordance with Recommendation ITU-R M.1084-5 Annex 4, Tables 1 and 3. The Table below also describes the harmonized channels where the digital technologies defined in the most recent version of Recommendation ITU-R M.1842 could be deployed.

Table 1 - Table of transmitting frequencies in the VHF maritime mobile band

Channel designator	Transmitting frequencies (MHz)		Inter-ship	Port operations and ship movement		Public correspondence
	From ship stations	From coast stations		Single frequency	Two frequency	
60	156.025	160.625		x	x	x
01	156.050	160.650		x	x	x
61	156.075	160.675		x	x	x
02	156.100	160.700		x	x	x
62	156.125	160.725		x	x	x
03	156.150	160.750		x	x	x
63	156.175	160.775		x	x	x
04	156.200	160.800		x	x	x
64	156.225	160.825		x	x	x
05	156.250	160.850		x	x	x
65	156.275	160.875		x	x	x
06	156.300		x			
2006	160.900	160.900				
66	156.325	160.925		x	x	x
07	156.350	160.950		x	x	x
67	156.375	156.375	x	x		
08	156.400		x			
68	156.425	156.425		x		
09	156.450	156.450	x	x		
70	156.525	156.525		Digital selective calling for distress, safety and calling		
11	156.550	156.550		x		
71	156.575	156.575		x		
12	156.600	156.600		x		
72	156.625		x			
13	156.650	156.650	x	x		
73	156.675	156.675	x	x		
14	156.700	156.700		x		
74	156.725	156.725		x		
15	156.750	156.750	x	x		
75	156.775	156.775		x		
16	156.800	156.800		DISTRESS, SAFETY AND CALLING		
76	156.825	156.825		76	156.825	156.825
17	156.850	156.850	x	17	156.850	156.850
77	156.875		x	77	156.875	
18	156.900	161.500		18	156.900	161.500
78	156.925	161.525		78	156.925	161.525

Table 1 - Table of transmitting frequencies in the VHF maritime mobile band

Channel designator	Transmitting frequencies (MHz)		Inter-ship	Port operations and ship movement		Public correspondence
	From ship stations	From coast stations		Single frequency	Two frequency	
1078	156.925	156.925		x		
2078		161.525		x		
19	156.950	161.550		x	x	x
1019	156.950	156.950		x		
2019		161.550		x		
79	156.975	161.575		x	x	x
1079	156.975	156.975		x		
2079		161.575		x		
20	157.000	161.600		x	x	x
1020	157.000	157.000		x		
2020		161.600		x		
80	157.025	161.625				
21	157.050	161.650		x	x	x
81	157.075	161.675		x	x	x
22	157.100	161.700		x	x	x
82	157.125	161.725		x	x	x
23	157.150	161.750		x	x	x
83	157.175	161.775		x	x	x
24	157.200	161.800		x	x	x
1024	157.200	157.200	x (digital only)	x (digital only)		
2024	161.800	161.800	x (digital only)	x (digital only)		
84	157.225	161.825		x	x	x
1084	157.225	157.225	x (digital only)	x (digital only)		
2084	161.825	161.825	x (digital only)	x (digital only)		
25	157.250	161.850		x	x	x
1025	157.250	157.250	x (digital only)	x (digital only)		
2025	161.850	161.850	x (digital only)	x (digital only)		
85	157.275	161.875		x	x	x
1085	157.275	157.275	x (digital only)	x (digital only)		
2085	161.875	161.875	x (digital only)	x (digital only)		
26	157.300	161.900		x	x	x
1026	157.300					
2026		161.900				
86	157.325	161.925		x	x	x
1086	157.325					
2086		161.925				
1027	157.350	157.350		x		
ASM 1	161.950	161.950				
87	157.375	157.375		x		
1028	157.400	157.400		x		
ASM 2	162.000	162.000				
88	157.425	157.425		x		
AIS 1	161.975	161.975				
AIS 2	162.025	162.025				

This circular replaces MSC.1/Circ.1460/Rev.4, which indicated the need for updating existing VHF radio communication equipment following the first radio survey after 1 January 2028.

The previous revision of this circular still holds effect after January 1, 2024.



Discussion

The ITU World Radio communication Conferences in 2012, 2015 and 2019 made extensive changes to Appendix 18 of the RR. While these changes do not affect the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), they do affect the use of other frequencies used for VHF meteorological, navigational and urgent marine information broadcasts, port operations and Vessel Traffic Service (VTS). According to the Performance standards for shipborne VHF radio installations capable of voice communication and digital selective calling (resolution MSC.511 (105)), VHF radio communication equipment should comply with the RR.

The Guidance on procedures for updating shipborne navigation and communication equipment (MSC.1/Circ.1389) notes that updates to application software and firmware to meet changes in IMO and ITU regulatory requirements are needed.

The MSC circular in question gives us basic procedures on the need to promulgate information to all affected parties in relation to IMO and ITU regulatory changes that have the potential to affect maritime navigation and Radio communication equipment and that equipment manufacturers should provide timely access to information pertaining to maritime navigation and radio communication equipment application software, for any relevant and that changes, originating from IMO and ITU regulations. Ship owners should ensure that the vessel's equipment is up to date with the latest requirements.

To ensure GMDSS communication capability and the availability of appropriate GMDSS radio communication equipment, and without prejudice to the arrangements contained in Appendix 18 of the RR, VHF radio communication equipment should be updated following the first radio survey after 1 January 2028, at the earliest, so that it meets the arrangements that will be in force by then.

Member States are invited to bring this information to the attention of the appropriate national authorities and all other parties concerned.

Disclaimer: Although all possible efforts have been made to ensure correctness and completeness of the contents contained in this information service, the Iranian Classification Society is not responsible for any errors or omissions made herein, nor held liable for any actions taken by any party as a result of information retrieved from this information service.