

IMO Circulars

HARMONIZATION OF GMDSS REQUIREMENTS FOR RADIO INSTALLATIONS ON BOARD SOLAS SHIPS



Relevant for Owners, Managers, ICS Surveyors & Project Managers

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Introduction

The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 109th session (2 to 6 December 2024), having considered a proposal to clarify the **radio installation requirements in sea area A3**, approved the revised Guidelines for the harmonization of GMDSS requirements for radio installations on board SOLAS ships, as set out in the annex. Member States are invited to bring the annexed revised Guidelines to the attention of all concerned, in particular ship-owners, ship operators, shipping managers, manufacturers and surveyors. This circular supersedes COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.2.

Based on the revised guideline, to clarify the radio installation requirements in sea area A3, a single MF/HF radio installation can be accepted as both the primary MF radio installation and the duplicated MF/HF radio installation, as detailed in this circular.

Equipment requirements (including duplication of equipment) for SOLAS ships

To clarify the radio installation requirements in sea area A3, the following paragraphs should be taken into consideration. According to this guideline, a single MF/HF radio installation may be accepted both as a primary MF radio installation and as a duplicated MF/HF radio installation, as provided in this circular.

If availability is ensured by using a combination of methods, which includes duplication of equipment, in addition to the radio installations required by regulations IV/7, IV/10 and IV/11, as appropriate, the following radio installations complying with regulation IV/14 should be available on board ships engaged on voyages in:



- 1 sea area A3 – a VHF radio installation complying with the requirements of regulation IV/7.1.1, and either an MF/HF radio installation complying with the requirements of regulation IV/11.1.1 and being able to comply fully with the watch requirements of regulation IV/12.1.3 or a recognized mobile satellite service Ship Earth Station (RMSS-SES) complying with the requirements of regulation IV/10.1.1. The MF/HF installation or RMSS-SES installed for duplication should also comply with regulation IV/10.2; and
- 2 sea area A4 – a VHF radio installation complying with the requirements of regulation IV/7.1.1, and an MF/HF radio installation complying with the requirements of regulation IV/11.1.1 and being able to comply fully with the watch requirements of regulation IV/12.1.3.

An RMSS-SES with lesser coverage installed onboard should determine the coverage of sea area A3 as a primary system for a ship. The MF/HF radio installation or RMSS-SES installed for duplication should also comply with regulation IV/10.2.

GMDSS equipment requirements in force for all ships to which SOLAS chapter IV applies

Equipment	A1	A2	A3	A4
VHF telephony installation with DSC capable of:	x	x	x	x
DSC watch on channel 70	x	x	x	x
Radiotelephony watch on channel 16	x	x	x	x
Watch on other appropriate frequency or frequencies for urgency and safety communications for the area in which the ship is navigating	x	x	x	x
MF telephony ⁶ installation with MF DSC capable of:		x	x	
DSC watch on 2 187.5 kHz		x	x	
Watch on other appropriate frequency or frequencies for urgency and safety communications for the area in which the ship is navigating		x	x	
SES providing RMSS			x	
MF/HF telephony ⁶ installation with DSC capable of:				x
DSC watch on 2 187.5 kHz and 8 414.5 kHz				x
Depending on time of day and geographical position, DSC watch on at least one of the frequencies 4 207.5 kHz, 6 312 kHz, 12 577 kHz or 16 804.5 kHz				x
Watch on other appropriate frequency or frequencies for urgency and safety communications for the area in which the ship is navigating				x
Duplicated VHF with DSC	x ⁷	x ⁷	x	x
Duplicated MF ⁶ with DSC		x ⁷		
Duplicated SES providing RMSS			x ^{4, 5}	
Duplicated MF/HF telephony ⁶ with DSC			x ⁴	x
Receiver(s) for MSI and SAR-related information ³	x	x	x	x
Float-free EPIRB	x	x	x	x
Radar SART or AIS SART	x ¹	x ¹	x ¹	x ¹
Portable GMDSS VHF transceivers	x ²	x ²	x ²	x ²
Automatic updating of position to all relevant radio communication equipment	x	x	x	x
The following additional requirements apply to passenger ships				
"Distress panel" and "distress alarm panel" (SOLAS regulations IV/6.4 and 6.6)	x	x	x	x
Two-way-on-scene radio communication on 121.5 MHz and 123.1 MHz from the navigating bridge. (SOLAS regulation IV/7.6)	x	x	x	x

- 1 Cargo ships between 300 and 500 GT: 1 set. Cargo ships of 500 GT and upwards and passenger ships: 2 sets.
- 2 Cargo ships between 300 and 500 GT: 2 sets. Cargo ships of 500 GT and upwards and passenger ships: 3 sets.
- 3 This may be either a combined ship earth station and EGC receiver or separate pieces of equipment.
- 4 Ships in sea area A3 may choose between duplication with either complete MF/HF transceiver or SES providing an RMSS with coverage equal to or broader than the primary RMSS (See section 1.6.3).
- 5 See section 1.6.3.2.
- 6 **A single MF/HF radio installation may be accepted both as a primary MF radio installation and a duplicated MF/HF radio installation, as provided in this circular.**
- 7 See section 1.6.3.1.

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