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## **Use of GMDSS equipment in general communications**

Notice to Masters and Officers of Merchant Vessels, Skippers of Fishing Vessels, Telecommunication Authorities and Training Institutions.

*This notice supersedes MGN 114*

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### **Summary**

This note draws attention to the contents of circular COMSAR/Circ.17 issued by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

#### Key Points

- It is good practice to make use of GMDSS equipment for general communications in the course of normal operations as an effective test of equipment and an opportunity to enhance operator skills thereby contributing to a reduction in false alerts.

1. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) recommends that GMDSS equipment should be used for routine communications or testing in order to ensure equipment availability and operator competency. This also helps to reduce the false alerts transmitted inadvertently by inexperienced operators.
2. Use of GMDSS equipment for transmission of general radiocommunications is one of the functional requirements specified by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Chapter IV, Regulation 4. Regular use of GMDSS equipment helps to develop operator competency and ensure equipment availability. If ships use other radiocommunication systems for the bulk of their business communications, a regular programme of sending selected traffic or test messages via GMDSS equipment should be adopted to ensure operator competency and equipment availability and to help reduce the incidence of false alerts. This policy extends to all GMDSS equipment suites including Digital Selective Calling (DSC) on VHF, MF and HF, to Inmarsat – A, B, C and Fleet F77 systems, and to any duplicated VHF and long range communications facilities.

## Further Information

Further information on the contents of this Notice can be obtained from:

Navigation Safety Branch  
Bay 2/30  
Maritime and Coastguard Agency  
Spring Place  
105 Commercial Road  
Southampton  
SO15 1EG

Telephone: +44 (0) 23 8032 9146  
Fax: +44 (0) 23 8032 9204  
E-Mail: [navigationsafety@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:navigationsafety@mcga.gov.uk)

General Enquiries: 24 Hour Infoline  
[infoline@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:infoline@mcga.gov.uk)  
0870 600 6505

MCA Website Address: Internet: <http://www.mcga.gov.uk>

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