



THE RESPONDER

Newsletter of the National Response Directorate

Volume 1.0

Fall 2014

The Auxiliary and the Global Marine Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) Submitted by Don Wellons

At one time communication by radio was limited to Morse Code (CW). As technology progressed, voice was added as another mode. Today CW is used infrequently. In addition to voice transmissions, we now have data streams, enabled by digital technology.

The Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) is an international system of protocols and equipment that makes use of advanced communications (digital) technology. Development of GMDSS was initiated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the system represents a



significant improvement in maritime communications. GMDSS is designed to (among other things) enhance ship-to-shore communications and provide rapid, automated distress alerting, with positional information available. While compliance is mandatory for

large cargo and passenger ships on international voyages or in the open sea, it is voluntary for recreational boaters, and it is recommended that recreational boater become familiar with its features.

As technology evolves, it brings changes to the various communication missions that the Auxiliary performs. Change is exemplified by two key points from [ALCOAST 263/13](#) [COMDTNOTE 2000](#):

“Effective 01 August 2013 the Coast Guard (CG) terminated the radio guard for the international distress and safety frequency 2182 kHz and the international Digital Select Calling (DSC) distress and safety frequency 2187.5 kHz. This closure also terminates the marine information and weather broadcasts transmitted on 2670 kHz.”

“Communications Stations (COMMSTA) and Communication Area Master Stations (CAMS) shall continue to monitor and respond to voice calls for assistance on 4125 kHz, 6215 kHz, 8291 kHz and 12290 kHz and to DSC calls on 4207.5 kHz, 6312 kHz, 8414.5 kHz, 12577 kHz, and 16804.5 kHz. Sectors shall continue to monitor and respond to VHF

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GMDSS Cont.

voice calls on 156.8 MHz, Channel 16 and DSC on 156.525 MHz Channel 70.”

Digital Select Calling (DSC) is a key feature of GMDSS and Auxiliarists should note that, effective June 17, 1999, all new VHF marine radios (other than hand held) were required to have DSC capability. DSC radios are readily identifiable by the distinctive, dedicated **red button** marked “DISTRESS”, many with a protective lid or cover. All DSC equipped vessels will be assigned a unique identity number, known as a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number. It is essential that all vessels with DSC radios obtain an MMSI number and have it programmed into the radio. Recreational boaters that purchase DSC radios are required to do this before using the DSC function of these radios.



Note: that the MMSI number is required to activate the automated distress function (**red button**) of the DSC radio.

MMSI numbers may be obtained from Sea Tow, Boat U.S. West

Marine, and other boating organizations, at no cost.

Given the Coast Guard’s Distress watch keeping responsibilities, outlined above, we are planning for the continued growth of our Auxiliary communication capabilities in support of the active duty Coast Guard. We will grow our Auxiliary Monitoring Program AUXMON through increased recruitment, training, and more efficient processes. Our storm/event augmentation capabilities, which focus on the frequencies outlined above, are expected to grow significantly as we formalize our coordination process, add to our digital capabilities, and provide targeted mission related training to our operators. All Auxiliary Telecommunications Operators (TCO) are invited to join us as active participants in the missions outlined above. More information about these missions and their equipment/software requirements may be obtained from the author or any member of the National Response Communications Staff.



Mishap Reporting and Analysis: Plotting a True Course for Safety

Submitted by: James M. McCarty DVC-RS

How do we know where we are going if we don’t know where we have been? Like any navigation problem, our future course to steer is dependent on knowing our past course, our current position and our destination. *Then* we make course corrections so that we can reach our destination safely and effectively. Plotting a course towards **improved safety** is no different. We must know our “past course and current position” i.e., our previous and current safety record before we can know what safety adjustments to make in the future. In other words, we have to get *smarter* about the safety environment.

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Mishap Reporting Cont.

What do we mean “get smarter”? In this case, “smarter” means we need to get a better understanding of mishap causation and frequency so we can project future training and qualification needs. This is where we need the help of crews, Flotillas, Divisions and Districts.

The Surface Operations Division of the National Response Directorate is charged with ensuring that the qualification and re-qualification processes identify the skills,

the mission and, most importantly, prevent mishaps and injuries. The Surface Operations Division is also charged with assisting the Education Division’s development of Team Coordination Training, TCT refreshers and Operations workshops. Once we understand what is happening in our waterways, we will provide summary reports back to the Districts/Divisions for their use in their own training and workshop evolutions.

Note: Keep in mind that a “mishap” is any incident that results in injury to people, damage to property, or reduces mission capability. (USCG Safety and Environmental Health Manual COMDTIDDT M5100.47).

Mishaps include pre-underway and post-underway trailering or un-trailering facilities, slips and falls while moored or underway that cause injuries that require some attention, groundings, capsizing or collisions, etc. (This does not include normal wear and tear occurrences.)

Please forward any mishap statistics/reports, no matter how raw, or minor they appear to be to the Surface Operations Division team, National Response Directorate at McCarty, James james.mccarty@cgauxnet.us

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Please submit articles for Publication, via the chain of leadership and management, to the editor:
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abilities and procedures that will safely and effectively accomplish



The key take away from this article is that all crews must take mishap reporting seriously. Each crew needs to understand the value of this analysis and feel a responsibility to report mishaps to their chain of leadership and OIA. The Operations Policy Manual Section D-1 addresses this responsibility as follows:

“This report is normally made to the OIA, who then must pass the information to the appropriate Coast Guard commands and Auxiliary leadership...”



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Can Statistics Really Make Us Safer?

Submitted by: James M. McCarty

Those of us with military or public service backgrounds may recall the principle that the mission always came first, and that personal safety was “a” high priority, but not “the” highest priority. In the Auxiliary, those two priorities are reversed. We must recognize that, although we are devoted to the mission, we are first and foremost responsible to ensure that our fellow crewmembers are not injured, and that facilities and other assets are not damaged. Until now, we in the Auxiliary have been striving to “reduce mishaps” without really having an accurate picture of the safety environment on our waterways, our docks and trailering ramps. How do we improve a fleet accident rate if we don’t know what that rate actually is? We may feel that we know the hazards and risks intuitively, or based on our experience, but what exactly is the safety situation that our crews face while on patrol?

In July, and September of 2013, the Surface Operations Division asked that Division and District The Responder

Operations Staff Officers and District Directorate Chiefs of Response begin forwarding mishap information to the National Branch Chief for Safety within the Surface Operations Division. So far, we have only had a limited response to this information request. Some Districts seem to have good records and have reported dozens of mishaps, while several others seem to have little or nothing to report.

For example, one District had about 25 mishaps during a given year, while others had none at all. This raises questions regarding mishap reporting, record keeping and communication in some Districts.

We took a look at just one District that reported complete information. This data indicated that more than 50% of their mishaps/injuries were caused by slips and falls at the dock, not, while underway. Now, is this a national trend that requires us to examine our training or qualification requirements? Or, is it a local statistical anomaly that does not reflect a serious problem throughout the country? As of now, we don’t know because our “sampling”

from Districts is too small to make those judgments.

Our goal is to analyze the frequency, causation factors, trends and patterns of mishaps based on nationwide reporting, and then provide summary reports back to the Districts and Divisions/Flotillas so that they can use this information in their own training and workshop discussions. The bottom line is that we need more comprehensive and accurate mishap information from all Districts to accomplish this goal.

Please examine your reporting methods to check if your data is reaching your District Response Directors and Staff officers, and that the District is reporting these data to National.

Districts should forward any statistics/reports, no matter how raw to the Surface Operations Division staff, National Response Directorate at james.mccarty@cgauxnet.us





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Welcome aboard – Organizational Changes in the National Response Directorate Staff

By Bruce C Pugh DVC-RE

Congratulations to COMO Gary Taylor who is the new Director (select) of the Response Directorate. Jack Slattery, the current Division Chief for Telecommunications, will become the Deputy Director of Response. Our current Director, Robert Shafer, is moving up to take on additional responsibilities as ANACO-RP. Congratulations and well done to all of you for all have done for the Directorate, and best wishes for continued success in your

new roles. All new positions/appointments will be effective 01 November 2014.

Current BC-Surface Safety, Marion Byerson, is now ANACO-DV (select). Congratulations Marion. David Larkin is our new BC-Surface Projects, welcome aboard. Other staff changes will be announced shortly.



Other News

By Bruce C Pugh DVC-RE

Do you have questions on the new **Order Management System (AOM)** for your patrols? How do I set up my account, need to reset your password, why can't I request orders, etc. Take a look at the FAQ page in the Auxiliary

knowledge base at <http://help.cgaux.org/index.php?/Knowledgebase/Article/View/324/27/aom-overview-and-faqs-revised-24-july-2014>

Did you know that amendments to Inland Navigation Rules (33 CFR 83) became effective 1 August 2014. Take a look on our Directorate news page for this and other happenings in Response.

<http://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=R-DEPT&category=WHATSNEW>



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