



# SOLAS Chapter IV Amendments

URC23062 | 29 November 2023

Notice to: Ship Owners / Managers / Operators / Surveyors / Auditors

This circular is issued to advise that the IMO, under Resolution [MSC.496\(105\)](#), has adopted amendments to SOLAS Chapter IV on Radio Communications. These amendments, which will enter into force on 01 January 2024, allow the use of modern communication systems in the GMDSS, especially in the area A3.

Key points to note are:

1. Although it is not clear from these amendments or any official interpretation of them, DBS considers that in practical terms, ships will have to comply from the first radio survey on or after 01 Jan 2024.
2. References to Inmarsat coverage have been replaced with the term “Recognized Mobile Satellite Service” (RMSS).
3. In addition to maritime mobile satellite services provided by INMARSAT, the IMO has recognized the maritime mobile satellite services of IRIDIUM SATELLITE LLC.

Note: Iridium Satellite System is acceptable as part of GMDSS, subject to acceptance of the flag Administration.

4. Although the definition of sea areas A1, A2 and A4 remain unchanged, the definition of “Sea Area A3” has changed. Sea Area A3 now means ‘an area, excluding sea areas A1 and A2, within the coverage of a recognised mobile satellite service (RMSS) supported by the ship earth station (SES) carried on board, in which continuous alerting is available’.

Note: Sea Area A3 is therefore variable depending on the type of RMSS SES installed onboard.

5. For a ship certified to operate in sea area A3, the Cargo Ship Safety Radio Certificate is to indicate the recognized mobile satellite service in brackets (INMARSAT / IRIDIUM).

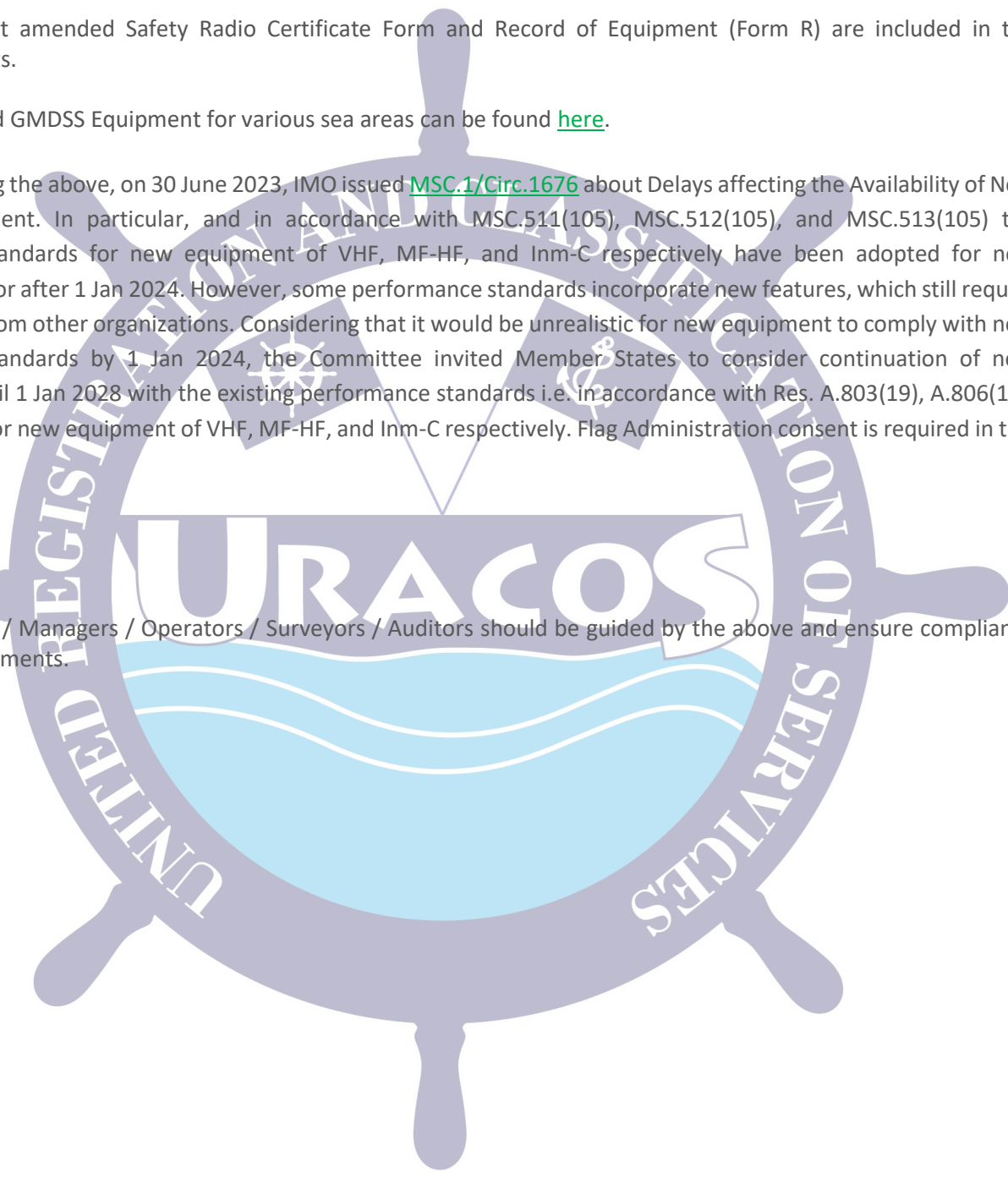
6. Transmitting and receiving distress and safety communications using direct-printing telegraphy (NBDP) is no longer a part of GMDSS requirements and hence need not be fitted on board (redundant).
7. Requirements for Radar SART / AIS-SART and two two-way VHF radiotelephone apparatus have been moved from SOLAS Ch-III, Life Saving Appliances and Arrangements to SOLAS Ch-IV Reg. 7.2 and 7.3.
8. Sea area A1 requires a satellite EPIRB; VHF-EPIRB can no longer be accepted.
9. The relevant amended Safety Radio Certificate Form and Record of Equipment (Form R) are included in the amendments.

A list of required GMDSS Equipment for various sea areas can be found [here](#).

Notwithstanding the above, on 30 June 2023, IMO issued [MSC.1/Circ.1676](#) about Delays affecting the Availability of New GMDSS Equipment. In particular, and in accordance with MSC.511(105), MSC.512(105), and MSC.513(105) the performance standards for new equipment of VHF, MF-HF, and Inm-C respectively have been adopted for new installations on or after 1 Jan 2024. However, some performance standards incorporate new features, which still require specifications from other organizations. Considering that it would be unrealistic for new equipment to comply with new performance standards by 1 Jan 2024, the Committee invited Member States to consider continuation of new installations until 1 Jan 2028 with the existing performance standards i.e. in accordance with Res. A.803(19), A.806(19), and A.807(19) for new equipment of VHF, MF-HF, and Inm-C respectively. Flag Administration consent is required in this respect.

#### Act now

All Ship Owners / Managers / Operators / Surveyors / Auditors should be guided by the above and ensure compliance with the requirements.



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MSC.1/Circ.1676  
30 June 2023

**DELAYS AFFECTING THE AVAILABILITY OF NEW GMDSS EQUIPMENT COMPLIANT  
WITH THE REVISED PERFORMANCE STANDARDS SET OUT IN RESOLUTIONS  
MSC.511(105), MSC.512(105) AND MSC.513(105)**

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 105th session (20 to 29 April 2022), adopted amendments to:

- .1 the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974 (resolution MSC.496(105));
- .2 the Protocol of 1988 relating to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (1988 SOLAS Protocol) (resolution MSC.497(105));
- .3 the International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft, 1994 (1994 HSC Code) (resolution MSC.498(105)) and the International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft, 2000 (2000 HSC Code) (resolution MSC.499(105)); and
- .4 the Code for the Construction and Equipment of Mobile Offshore Drilling Units, 1979 (1979 MODU Code) (resolution MSC.504(105)), the Code for the Construction and Equipment of Mobile Offshore Drilling Units, 1989 (1989 MODU Code) (resolution MSC.505(105)) and the Code for the Construction and Equipment of Mobile Offshore Drilling Units, 2009 (2009 MODU Code) (resolution MSC.506(105)),

which will enter into force on 1 January 2024.

2 The Committee also adopted, inter alia, resolutions:

- .1 MSC.511(105) on *Performance standards for shipborne VHF radio installations capable of voice communication and digital selective calling*;
- .2 MSC.512(105) on *Performance standards for shipborne MF and MF/HF radio installations capable of voice communication, digital selective calling and reception of maritime safety information and search and rescue related information*; and
- .3 MSC.513(105) on *Performance standards for Inmarsat-C ship earth stations capable of transmitting and receiving direct-printing communications*,

which recommend Governments to ensure that shipborne equipment installed on or after 1 January 2024, which will form part of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), conform to performance standards not inferior to those adopted at that session.

3 The Committee, at its 107th session (31 May to 9 June 2023), having considered information provided by IEC and CIRM on the availability of GMDSS equipment after 1 January 2024, noted that considerable work had been carried out by the radio manufacturing industry and the standards' organizations to develop the new equipment required. However, some of the performance standards incorporate new features which still require specification from other organizations.

4 The Committee, therefore, concluded that it was unrealistic for new shipborne VHF radio installations, shipborne MF and MF/HF radio installations or Inmarsat-C ship earth stations conforming to performance standards specified in the annex to resolutions MSC.511(105), MSC.512(105) and MSC.513(105), respectively, to be available for installation from 1 January 2024.

5 In this regard, the Committee invited Member States to consider permitting until 1 January 2028 the continued installation of:

- .1 shipborne VHF radio installations conforming to performance standards not inferior to those specified in the annex to resolution A.803(19), as amended;
- .2 shipborne MF and MF/HF radio installations conforming to performance standards not inferior to those specified in the annex to resolutions A.804(19), as amended and A.806(19), as amended; and
- .3 Inmarsat-C ship earth stations conforming to performance standards not inferior to those specified in the annex to resolution A.807(19), as amended.

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

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