

NEWS BRIEF

NCSR 11





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The IMO Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) held its 11th session from June 4 to 13, 2024. This Brief provides an overview of the more significant issues progressed at this session.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Draft amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23 and associated codes to improve pilot transfer arrangements
- Draft MSC resolution on Performance Standards for Digital Navigational Data System (NAVDAT)
- SOLAS V to include the VHF data exchange system (VDES) as an additional voluntary carriage requirement
- Draft revision of the Guidance on the Validity of Radiocommunications Equipment Installed and Used on Ships.

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NAVIGATION

Revision of SOLAS Regulation V/23 and Associated Instruments to Improve the Safety of Pilot Transfer Arrangements

Following discussions at NCSR 10 about the continued worldwide record of pilot transfer accidents and observations of unsafe transfer arrangements, and the subsequent establishment of a correspondence group to work on developing amendments to SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 23 and associated instruments, the Sub-Committee considered the report containing draft amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23 and draft performance standards for pilot transfer arrangements.

The Sub-Committee had a lengthy discussion on the application of the proposed draft amendments to SOLAS and the draft performance standards, in particular, the application to ships not subject to SOLAS chapter I (i.e. non-SOLAS pilot transfer ships) and the application of certain requirements to existing ships. The Sub-Committee considered that the new requirements should be applied to ships as widely as possible while taking due consideration of the feasibility of implementation and to achieve consistent and safer transfer arrangements at a global level, certain prescriptive requirements might need to be introduced.

Performance Standards on Pilot Transfer Arrangements

The draft MSC resolution on performance standards on pilot transfer arrangements was finalized in principle, for subsequent approval and adoption by the MSC Committee, and entry into force at the same time as the revised SOLAS regulation V/23. The draft performance standards include, among other things:

- Definition of "Securing a pilot ladder at intermediate length" to provide clarity on securing arrangements
- The date of manufacture and the date of being placed into service, both verifiable as the base of counting, as the expiry date for replacement of pilot ladders and manropes
- Minimum winch reel drum diameters of at least 0.16m for the stowage of pilot ladders
- Use the term "familiarization" for part E of the performance standards in line with the existing requirements under the ISM Code and STCW regulation I/14

The Sub-Committee agreed that these new performance standards should be adopted as a mandatory instrument, along with the corresponding SOLAS amendments for regulation V/23.

Revised SOLAS Regulation V/23

The Sub-Committee noted wide support for the application of the revised provisions to non-SOLAS ships and existing ships but confirmed the principle of discretion for Administrations for the determination of application of SOLAS regulation V/23 to non-SOLAS ships. The implementation deadline is to be linked to the first survey one year after the entry-into-force date of the revised regulation for SOLAS ships, and two years after entry into force for ships not subject to surveys and certifications under SOLAS chapter I (non-SOLAS ships).

Draft amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23 and appendix, as well as the consequential draft amendments to 1994 and 2000 HSC Codes, and 2008 SPS Code, were finalized for subsequent approval and adoption by the Committee.

Revision of MSC.1/Circ.1428

Proposals for a revision of MSC.1/Circ.1428 on *Pilot Transfer Arrangements – Required boarding arrangements for pilots* were considered by the Sub-Committee, and the need for a number of modifications to the illustrations of pilot ladders and pilot transfer arrangements was agreed before the draft circular could be concluded. Due to time constraints, the Group was unable to finalize the work, however, expressed that the revised poster on required pilot transfer arrangements should be implemented in line with the entry-into-force date of the related SOLAS

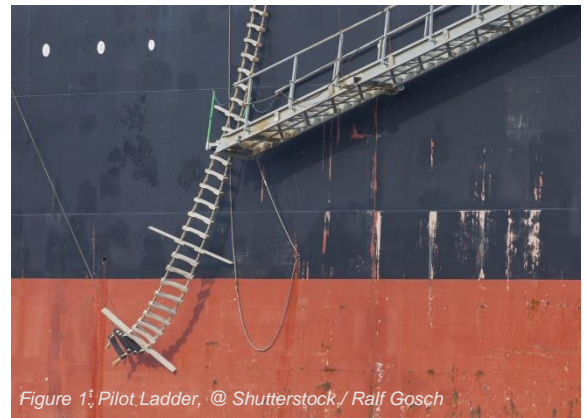


Figure 1: Pilot Ladder, @ Shutterstock / Ralf Gosch

amendments and new performance standards and that, in the meantime, the existing poster in MSC.1/Circ.1428 should continue to be applied.

Early Implementation of the Revisions to SOLAS Regulation V/23

The Sub-Committee discussed early implementation of the revisions to SOLAS regulation V/23 and noted support for the early voluntary implementation of the revised provisions, while ensuring that port States following the early voluntary implementation would not impose requirements on foreign ships, finalized the draft MSC circular on voluntary early implementation of the amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23 on pilot transfer arrangements, with a view to approval by the Committee.

Next Steps: The draft amendments are anticipated to receive approval during MSC 109 (December 2024), with the aim of adopting them at MSC 110 (May 2025).

Development of Amendments to SOLAS Chapters IV and V and Performance Standards and Guidelines to Introduce VHF Data Exchange System (VDES)

The Sub-Committee considered the options to amend SOLAS chapter V to introduce VDES either as a mandatory or as a voluntary carriage requirement. During the discussion, there were differing views on amending SOLAS chapter V. Some supported making VDES a mandatory requirement due to its potential to address AIS congestion, security issues, and support wider e-navigation applications. Others suggested making VDES an optional requirement due to the lack of commercial satellite services and shore infrastructure. Additionally, some mentioned considering a transition period from AIS to VDES. In relation to the use of VDES for the GMDSS, the Sub-Committee noted that MSC 108, as part of the discussions related to the dissemination of MSI- and SAR-related information, had agreed that the use of any new satellite system, including VDES, for use in the GMDSS, should be recognized by the Organization in accordance with the applicable procedures.



Figure 2: Marine Deck Officer with VHF. © Igor Kardasov/Shutterstock

Next Steps: Due to time constraints, NCSR 11 could not make progress on the preparation of draft amendments to SOLAS Chapter V. This work will be presented to MSC 109 (December 2024) for an extension of the target completion year of the associated output to 2025 and the correspondence group should be re-established to enable further progress of the work intersessionally.

Routeing Measures and Ship Reporting Systems

The Sub-Committee approved a draft COLREG.2 circular containing amended ship's routeing system (TSS) "In the approaches to Hook of Holland and at North Hinder" with a view to adoption by MSC 109, and for implementation six months after its adoption.

Further, the Sub-Committee agreed to the draft SN.1 circular containing:

1. Draft revised recommendation on navigation for containerships in traffic separation schemes Off Vlieland, Terschelling-German Bight, Off Friesland and German Bight western approach; and
2. Draft areas to be avoided around oil rigs off the Brazilian coast – Santos Basin

Next Steps: The finalized drafts are anticipated to be adopted during the MSC 109 (December 2024), and their implementation is expected to occur six months thereafter.



Development of Guidelines for the Use of Electronic Nautical Publications (ENP)

Draft *Guidelines on Installation and Use of Electronic Nautical Publications (ENPs)*, were proposed to the Sub-Committee, which received support in principle. However, views were expressed on matters that required further consideration, such as technological neutrality and addressing the use of portable devices (i.e. tablets) and cybersecurity; whether the guidelines should cover carriage of ENPs only or also installation, and whether section 5.1 in the record of Equipment of the relevant SOLAS Safety Certificates should be removed from the draft guidelines and addressed instead as part of the unified interpretations contained in MSC.1/Circ.1496.

Also, concerns were raised about expending resources on ENP standards outside the ECDIS environment, instead of advancing an integrated approach to managing nautical publication information, such as S-100. Furthermore, the draft guidelines did not appear to consider that some information could be presented in the ECDIS, while other information could remain in paper form or in another ENP format.

Next steps: Noting that a number of issues still required consideration, a correspondence group on *Guidelines for the Use of Electronic Nautical Publications (ENP)* was established to progress the draft guidelines intersessionally, and report back to the next NCSR 12 (May 2025).

COMMUNICATIONS

Revision of the Criteria for the Provision of Mobile Satellite Communication Services in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) (Resolution A.1001(25))

The guidelines for mobile satellite communication services in the GMDSS are outlined in Resolution A.1001(25). These criteria establish the requirements that a satellite communications system must meet in order to be acknowledged as a service provider within the GMDSS. Additionally, MSC.1/Circ.1414 offers guidance to potential GMDSS satellite service providers. However, as these standards were developed at a time when the sole recognized mobile satellite system was a geostationary one, evaluating a Low Earth Orbit system (such as Iridium) posed challenges. As a result, it was unanimously decided that these regulations should be revised.

NCSR 11 has prepared a draft *Assembly resolution on criteria for providing mobile satellite communication systems in the GMDSS*. This resolution revokes both Resolution A.1001(25) and MSC.1/Circ.1414 and will apply to both existing and future RMSSs without imposing additional constraints or costs on current systems.

Next Steps: The draft will be presented for approval at MSC 109, with the goal of being adopted by Assembly 34 (December 2025) and will affect satellite system manufacturers aiming to be included in the GMDSS.

Monitoring of the Performance of LRIT Shipborne Equipment

The Sub-Committee considered proposals regarding measures to enhance the monitoring of the performance of LRIT shipborne equipment. Regarding the proposal for the enforced entry of the IMO ship identification number (i.e. IMO number) into AIS equipment, it was agreed to delete the words "where available" in paragraph 6.1.1 of the *Recommendation on performance standards for a universal shipborne automatic identification system (AIS)* (resolution MSC.74(69), annex 3), and also to insert a new footnote into the same paragraph, clarifying the mandatory entry of the IMO number, which was regulated by resolution A.1117(30).

Considering that if the IMO number is permanently entered into AIS equipment during the manufacturing process such a measure would make it impossible to install the AIS equipment on a different ship. Thus, it was agreed that the IMO number should not be permanently entered into the AIS equipment but once entered, it should be further protected from unauthorized modification. In addition, the Group agreed also that another form of identification number (e.g. official flag State number) should be entered into AIS equipment on ships with no IMO number.



Furthermore, the Sub-Committee considered the proposal for encoding AIS equipment with a unique vendor identification code, and it was noted that this requirement had already been in effect since 2018 in compliance with IEC 61993-2 (2018) and Recommendation ITU-R M.1371-5 (these instruments referred to this Code as "manufacturer ID" and "vendor ID" respectively). However, "vendor ID" had been optionally available since Recommendation ITU-R M.1371-3 (2007), retrofitting existing equipment with it as a permanent measure would not be feasible as the vendor ID was best to be embedded during the manufacturing process.

In connection with the above, the Sub-Committee agreed to the draft MSC resolution on *Performance Standards for a Universal Shipborne Automatic Identification System (AIS)*, enhancing the existing requirement for the entry of the IMO number into the AIS equipment and introducing new requirements for entry of a "unique manufacturer equipment identification number" and an "official flag State number", where the ship has no IMO number.

Next steps: The draft will be presented at MSC 109 (December 2024), and if adopted, will affect both new and existing ships on or after January 1, 2029, to allow sufficient time for the development of the necessary testing standards and mass production of the new equipment.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Development of Performance Standards for a Digital Navigational Data System (NAVDAT)

MSC 108, in considering the implementation of NAVDAT, had agreed that NAVDAT implementation should not entail the replacement of shipborne NAVTEX receivers with NAVDAT receivers. At this session of the NCSR Sub-Committee, NAVDAT implementation issues and implications of its introduction, both from the shore and ship perspectives, including coordination with existing NAVTEX services and carriage requirements were further considered. The Sub-Committee considered the draft performance standards for NAVDAT and the draft revised resolution MSC.509(105), incorporating a new annex on criteria for use when providing a NAVDAT service.

Draft Performance Standards for NAVDAT

In discussing the draft MSC resolution, it was emphasized that the human-machine interface, including the presentation of alerts for the NAVDAT receiver equipment, should be in accordance with the *Guidelines on Software Quality Assurance and Human-Centred Design of e-navigation* in order to alleviate the burden to seafarers. Furthermore, modifications were necessary to indicate that upon receipt of new SAR-related information messages, the equipment should give an alert instead of a continuous audible alarm and that the requirement to include an interface for bridge alert management (BAM) could be simplified by referring to the *Performance Standards for bridge alert management* (resolution MSC.302(87)).

The Sub-Committee approved the finalized draft MSC resolution on *Performance standards for the reception of maritime safety information and search and rescue related information by MF and HF digital navigational data (NAVDAT) system* with a view to adoption by the Committee.

Draft Revision of Resolution MSC.509(105)

The Working Group considered the draft revision of resolution MSC.509(105) on *Provision of radio services for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)* and agreed the need to understand the NAVDAT service areas and the impact on, or the alignment with the existing NAVTEX service areas. The Sub-Committee approved the finalized draft revision of resolution MSC.509(105) after adding HF propagation characteristics, for adoption by the Committee.

Remaining Work for the Implementation of the NAVDAT system

Subsequently, the Working Group considered the remaining work required to be conducted in the context of implementation of the NAVDAT system, which includes:

- The need to develop a NAVDAT coordination scheme, considering the similarities between NAVDAT and the existing NAVTEX functions and operations



- Development of a NAVDAT manual
- Amendments to MSI manuals to support the introduction of NAVDAT
- Update of the GMDSS Master Plan in GISIS to reflect NAVDAT stations

To this end, the Sub-Committee approved the revised road map on the issues to be considered regarding the introduction of the NAVDAT service, to be considered by the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group on Maritime Radiocommunication Matters, the outcome to be advised to NCSR 12. Finally, the remaining work on the implementation of the NAVDAT system is to be further considered under the existing output of "Developments in GMDSS services, including guidelines on maritime safety information (MSI)".

Next Steps: The approved draft revision of resolution MSC.509(105) will be presented to MSC 109 (December 2024) for adoption. With respect to the remaining work for the implementation of the NAVDAT system the work will progress intersessionally.

Developments in GMDSS Services, Including Guidelines on Maritime Safety Information (MSI)

NCSR 11 instructed the joint IMO/ITU Experts Group to draft SOLAS amendments and advise NCSR 12, while also considering alignment with "RMSS" in resolution A.707(17) and Recommendation ITU-T D.90. The Sub-Committee approved the draft Assembly resolution on charges for distress and safety communications via recognized mobile satellite services in the GMDSS.

Next Steps: The draft resolution is expected to be adopted at MSC 109 (December 2024), and at Assembly 34 (December 2025).

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Guidance on the Validity of Radiocommunications Equipment Installed and Used on Ships (MSC.1/Circ.1460/Rev.4)

The Sub-Committee considered proposed amendments to MSC.1/Circ.1460/Rev.4 to clarify the implementation of the new VHF channel plan by shore-based facilities with regards to new and existing VHF radiocommunication equipment with the existing and new channel arrangements in appendix 18 of the Radio Regulations (RR) in order to support the implementation of the related shipborne radiocommunications equipment.

Some VHF coast stations might have already implemented the new channel arrangements or might do so before January 1, 2028. However, it was noted that currently all newly manufactured VHF radiocommunication equipment could support both the current and new channel arrangements, and that the new channel arrangements in appendix 18 of the RR did not affect any of the VHF channels used for GMDSS and AIS communications.

Next Steps: The Sub-Committee approved a draft revision of MSC.1/Circ.1460/Rev.4, indicating the need for updating existing VHF radiocommunication equipment following the first radio survey after January 1, 2028, to be submitted to MSC 109.



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