



## GMDSS requirements for area A3

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

The revised SOLAS Chapter IV, (IMO Resolution **MSC.496(105)**), contains requirements for radiocommunications that apply to new and existing ships on or after 1 January 2024.

COMSAR, the IMO Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue, has revised their Circular titled Harmonization of GMDSS Requirements for Radio Installations on board SOLAS Ships. The revised circular [COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.3](#) supersedes COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.2.

The Circular contains, in Annex, Guidelines for the Harmonization of GMDSS Requirements for Radio Installations on board SOLAS Ships, which took effect from 01 January 2024.

COMSAR plays a crucial role in developing and updating international regulations and guidelines related to:

- **Radiocommunications:** This includes aspects of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), which is a globally integrated communications system for maritime distress and safety.
- **Search and Rescue (SAR):** This involves establishing procedures, developing manuals (like the IAMSAR Manual, jointly published with ICAO), and ensuring effective coordination for maritime search and rescue operations worldwide.

### Points to Note:

The GMDSS equipment requirements for all ships trading in areas A1 – A3 and to which SOLAS Chapter IV applies are:

Equipment	A1	A2	A3
VHF telephony installation with DSC capable of:	X	X	X
DSC watch on channel 70	X	X	X
Radiotelephony watch on channel 16	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
MF telephony <sup>6</sup> installation with MF DSC capable of:		X	X
DSC watch on 2187.5 kHz		X	X
Depending on time of day and geographical position, DSC watch on at least one of the frequencies 4207.5 kHz, 6312 kHz, 12577 kHz or 16804.5 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
Duplicated VHF with DSC	X <sup>7</sup>	X <sup>7</sup>	X
Duplicated MF <sup>6</sup> with DSC		X <sup>7</sup>	
Duplicated SES providing RMSS			X <sup>4,5</sup>
Duplicated MF/HF telephony <sup>6</sup> with DSC			X <sup>4</sup>
Receiver(s) for MSI and SAR-related information <sup>3</sup>	X	X	X
Float-free EPIRB	X	X	X
Radar SART or AIS SART	X <sup>1</sup>	X <sup>1</sup>	X <sup>1</sup>
Portable GMDSS VHF transceivers	X <sup>2</sup>	X <sup>2</sup>	X <sup>2</sup>
Automatic updating of position to all relevant radiocommunication equipment	X	X	X
<b>The following additional requirements apply to passenger ships</b>			
"Distress panel" and "distress alarm panel" (SOLAS regulations IV/6.4 and 6.6)	X	X	X
Two-way-on-scene radiocommunication on 121.5 MHz and 123.1 MHz from the navigating bridge. (SOLAS regulation IV/7.6)	X	X	X

<sup>1</sup> Cargo ships between 300 and 500 gt.: 1 set. Cargo ships of 500 gt. and upwards and passenger ships: 2 sets.

<sup>2</sup> Cargo ships between 300 and 500 gt.: 2 sets. Cargo ships of 500 gt. and upwards and passenger ships: 3 sets.

<sup>3</sup> This may be either a combined ship earth station and EGC receiver or separate pieces of equipment.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Section 1.6.3.2 of COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.3 gives guidance on duplication of equipment.

<sup>6</sup> 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 the circular.

<sup>7</sup> Section 1.6.3.1 of COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.3 gives guidance on duplication of equipment.

**NOTE:**

An important revision to the guidelines is point 6 above. Previously the guidelines stated that an MF/HF radio installation could substitute an MF radio installation. Rev. 3 of the circular clarifies that 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 the circular.

SOLAS Requirements before and after 2024:

Equipment	Pre-2024	After 2024
VHF / MF / SES / Duplicated VHF & SES	A1 + A2 + A3	A1 + A2 + A3
VHF / MF / RMSS SES <sup>1</sup> / Duplicated VHF & MF/HF	A1 + A2 + A3	A1 + A2 + A3
VHF / MF/HF / Duplicated VHF & SES <sup>2</sup>	A1 + A2 + A3	A1 + A2 + A3 (VHF/MF <sup>3</sup> /SES/Duplicated MF/HF)

<sup>1</sup> Recognized Mobile Satellite Service Ship Earth Station

<sup>2</sup> SES shall be included as primary system after 2024

<sup>3</sup> A single MF/HF radio installation may be accepted both as a primary MF radio installation and a duplicated MF/HF radio installation

Act now

Ship Owners / Managers / Operators / Surveyors / Auditors should note the contents of COMSAR.1-Circ.32-Rev.3 and be guided accordingly.