



clever solutions | beyond class

CIRCULAR

GMDSS requirements for area A3

C25038 | 21 July 2025

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 ⁶ 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 ⁷	X ⁷	X
Duplicated MF ⁶ with DSC		X ⁷	
Duplicated SES providing RMSS			X ^{4,5}
Duplicated MF/HF telephony ⁶ with DSC			X ⁴
Receiver(s) for MSI and SAR-related information ³	X	X	X
Float-free EPIRB	X	X	X
Radar SART or AIS SART	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹
Portable GMDSS VHF transceivers	X ²	X ²	X ²
Automatic updating of position to all relevant radiocommunication equipment	X	X	X
The following additional requirements apply to passenger ships			
"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

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

² Cargo ships between 300 and 500 gt.: 2 sets. Cargo ships of 500 gt. and upwards and passenger ships: 3 sets.

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

⁴ 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.

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

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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 ¹ / Duplicated VHF & MF/HF	A1 + A2 + A3	A1 + A2 + A3
VHF / MF/HF / Duplicated VHF & SES ²	A1 + A2 + A3	A1 + A2 + A3 (VHF/MF ³ /SES/Duplicated MF/HF)

¹ Recognized Mobile Satellite Service Ship Earth Station

² SES shall be included as primary system after 2024

³ 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.