

Commonwealth of Dominica



Office of the Maritime Administrator

TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF MERCHANT SHIPS, AND RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS

SUBJECT: AUTOMATIC IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS (AIS)

REFERENCE: (a) Resolution MSC.74(69), Annex 3, Recommendation on Performance Standards for a Universal Shipborne Automatic Identification System (AIS);

(b) SN/Circ.227, Guidelines for the Installation of a Shipborne Automatic Identification System;

(c) MSC.1/Circ.1252, Guidelines on Annual Testing of Automatic Identification Systems; and

(d) Resolution MSC.308(88), Adoption of Amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended.

APPLICABILITY:

The IMO has established mandatory carriage requirements for approved AIS equipment under SOLAS, Chapter V, Regulation 19.2.4, which became effective on 1 July 2002. Carriage requirements apply to:

- (a) All ships of 300 gross tons (GT) and upwards engaged on international voyages;
- (b) Cargo ships of 500 GT and upwards engaged on international voyages; and
- (c) All passenger ships irrespective of size.

All Ships means any ship, vessel or craft irrespective of type and purpose. Therefore, these regulations shall apply to all registered private and commercial yachts and fishing vessels.

PURPOSE:

This Circular explains the carriage requirements for AIS. It provides performance standards, guidelines for installation and elaborates on the SOLAS regulation regarding the annual test as from 1 July 2012. It further provides National requirements.

BACKGROUND:

Provide any background information regarding development, implementation, adoption etc. of new regulations or incidents that are associated with the information in this circular.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Implementation

All ships constructed on or after 1 July 2002 must be fitted with an approved AIS.

Existing ships engaged on international voyages constructed before 1 July 2002 must be fitted according to the following timetable:

- a. Passenger ships – not later than 1 July 2003;
- b. Tankers – not later than the first Safety Equipment Survey after 1 July 2003.

Existing ships other than passenger ships and tankers:

- a. 50,000 GT and upwards – not later than 1 July 2004;
- b. 300 GT and upward but less than 50,000 GT – not later than the first Safety Equipment Survey after 1 July 2004 or by 31 December 2004, whichever occurs earlier.

Existing ships not engaged on international voyages, constructed before 1 July 2002 must be fitted not later than 1 July 2008.

All Commonwealth of Dominica flagged vessels are expected to comply in accordance with the above schedule of implementation. Flag State Inspectors shall be assessing vessels for compliance.

2. Operation

There is a companion 2002 amendment to SOLAS that requires that all ships fitted with AIS maintain the AIS in operation at all times except where international agreements, rules or standards provide for the protection of navigational information. With respect to this requirement, Masters should be aware of Regulation 8 of Chapter XI-2 of SOLAS, titled “Masters discretion for ship safety and security.” This regulation reinforces and provides the Master with significant discretion concerning the safety and security of his or her ship where continued operation of the AIS would pose a higher risk.

In way of examples, within ports, information on the location of all ships will be particularly valuable to port authorities. However, there may be circumstances that would be considered high risk, such as during volatile cargo transfers within storage terminals, where continued use of the AIS may not even be allowed. Continued use of the AIS while transiting areas known for incidents of armed robbery and piracy, such as the Straits of Malacca, may also be considered a very high risk.

For these and similar other reasons, the ship’s Master may exercise discretionary authority to switch the device off if safety is deemed to be compromised by its continued operation. Such action, however, shall be properly recorded in the official log and reported to the Company Security Officer and any Coastal State Authority with a vested interest in accordance with the Ship Security Plan provisions. Safety concerns shall always override those of maritime security.

3. Annual Testing

An amendment to SOLAS Chapter V, Regulation 18 has entered into force as of 1 July 2012. As per IMO Resolution MSC.308(88) the amendment adds a new paragraph 9 after the existing paragraph 8, which requires that:

“The Automatic Identification System (AIS) shall be subjected to an annual test. The test shall be conducted by an approved surveyor or an approved testing or servicing facility. The test shall verify the correct programming of the ship static information, correct data exchange with connected sensors as well as verifying the radio performance by radio frequency measurement and on-air testing using e.g., a Vessel Traffic Service (VTS). A copy of the test report shall be retained on board the ship.

Further, it is the understanding of the Dominica Maritime Administration that the Guidelines on Annual Testing of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) as contained in MSC.1/Circ.1252, although predating the new SOLAS regulation, have

not been revoked; therefore the Administration still gives effect to these guidelines provided that the approved surveyor or approved testing or servicing facility is authorized by an IACS member duly recognized by the Administration.

Required Action by Owners/Operators

Owners are required to ensure that their vessels to which the provisions of these regulations are applicable comply with the requirements by the date indicated above. Owners and Masters are also required to ensure that the annual testing of the Automatic Identification System is completed as required and the report of which maintained on board and logged according.

Any questions can be directed to:

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