



CIRCULAR No 22

Updating the training and certification of GMDSS radio operators in relation to amendments to SOLAS Chapter IV and ITU Radio Regulations

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For information and guidance to shipowners,
crew recruitment service providers and
seafarers

Following the amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), which entered into force on 1 January 2024, and the amendments to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Radio Regulations, the arrangements for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) have been significantly updated. The training and assessment of seafarers must comply with current international standards, based on the updated IMO Model Courses 1.25 (GOC) and 1.26 (ROC) (2025 editions).

1. Application for GMDSS certificates and endorsements: the issuance of a GMDSS certificate (GOC/ROC) is based on the completion of training where the curriculum includes the updated GMDSS regulations. This includes new frequency usage rules defined by the ITU and Recognized Mobile Satellite Services (RMSS, e.g., Inmarsat and Iridium). Practical training must be conducted on compliant simulators or equipment that allow for the correct use of distress panels and Enhanced Group Call (EGC) receivers, as well as RADAR SART/AIS-SART and AIS-enabled EPIRBs.

2. Revalidation of endorsements: to revalidate an endorsement, seafarers are required to complete refresher training covering the new GMDSS regulations. This includes revised distress alerting procedures and the use of modern communication equipment in accordance with SOLAS Chapter IV (revised with IMO resolution MSC.496(105)), as well as changes to distress alerting procedures resulting from amendments to Articles 32 and 33 of the ITU Radio Regulations.

3. Exemptions: seafarers serving on board ships equipped with the "Iridium" RMSS and who have completed manufacturer-specific training, are not required to undergo the refresher training for the revalidation of endorsement. To qualify for this exemption, a corresponding certificate from the manufacturer or the shipowner must be submitted to the Estonian Transport Administration.

Shipowners and operators must ensure that seafarers are trained to perform distress signalling in accordance with the nine functional requirements of SOLAS Chapter IV, including ship-to-shore distress alerts using at least two independent means.

For any further questions, please contact the Maritime Division of the Estonian Transport Administration (info@transpordiamet.ee).

(Digitally signed)
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