



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) **Equipment Carriage Requirements** **For** **Commercial Fishing Vessels Operating in Alaska Region**

Based on guidance from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Thirteenth and Seventeenth Coast Guard Districts have cooperated to provide the following information on communication equipment installation requirements. *Commercial fishing, fish tender and fish processing vessels over 300 gross tons operating in the Alaskan Region must be equipped with GMDSS communications equipment for either Sea Area A-3 and/or Sea Area A-4 as required by 47 CFR 80, Subpart W.* Sea Areas are defined as follows:

- **Sea Area A-1.** An area within radiotelephone coverage of at least one VHF in which continuous DSC (digital selective calling) alerting is available. The Coast Guard has generally interpreted this to mean the area within 20 nm from shore where a Rescue 21 service is available when declaring Sea Area A1. Sea Area A1 has therefore not been declared in and around Alaska.
- **Sea Area A-2.** An area, excluding Sea Area A1, within the radiotelephone coverage of at least one MF (medium frequency) coast station in which continuous DSC alerting is available. The Coast Guard has closed its MF stations and therefore will not declare Sea Area A2.
- **Sea Area A-3.** An area, excluding Sea Areas A1 and A2, within the coverage of an Inmarsat geostationary in which continuous alerting is available. This has been interpreted to include the satellite coverage areas roughly between 70 degrees north and 70 degrees south latitudes.
- **Sea Area A-4.** An area outside Sea Areas A1, A2 and A3 (i.e., polar regions).

There is no practical fleet-wide exemption from GMDSS equipment carriage requirements for commercial fishing vessels. Each vessel seeking relief from any of the requirements may apply to FCC for an exemption as described in 47 CFR Part 80.1071. The request should include justification and information on the equivalent means to be employed to meet the FCC requirements. Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Absent any such exemption or waiver, each vessel must meet all the requirements of an A-3 vessel and/or A-4 vessel depending on where the vessel plans to operate. An inspection on these vessels is a regular GMDSS inspection. If a waiver or exemption has been granted, that document must be posted in the vessel's wheelhouse available for viewing by any inspector.

For more information on GMDSS and other navigation requirements, you may link to:
<https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=GMDSS>