
EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

1. These Regulations give effect to amendments to Chapter IV of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974 which were adopted by states party to that Convention at a Conference on the Global Maritime Distress and Safety Systems (GMDSS) on 11th November 1988. GMDSS is the International Maritime Organisation's worldwide network of automated emergency communications for vessels at sea.

2. The amendments come into force internationally on 1st February 1992. They apply to all ships constructed after 1st February 1995 (new ships) and from 1st February 1999 to ships constructed before 1st February 1995, with some phasing in (see paragraph 5 below) during the interim period.

3. Part I of these Regulations contains definitions, application provisions, and provisions for exemptions, equivalents and performance standards.

4. Part II contains the GMDSS provisions. It requires new ships to carry new types of radio equipment including equipment for satellite communication, emergency radio beacons (EPIRBs) and other items. The carriage requirements depend on the ship's area of operations. For this purpose the world is divided up under the GMDSS into four sea areas: area A1 which is within range of VHF coastal radio; area A2 which is within range of MF coastal radio; area A3 which is within coverage of geostationary satellites; and area A4 which covers the remainder of the world. The requirements for maintenance of the equipment carried permit some flexibility: maintenance may be achieved by duplication of equipment, by shore-based maintenance or by an at-sea maintenance capability.

5. Part III of the Regulations applies to existing ships and re-enacts the provisions of the Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) Regulations 1980 as amended. Those re-enacted provisions will continue to apply to existing ships (ie those that were operating under the 1980 regulations) until 31st January 1999, after which date all ships will be required to comply fully with Part II. However, existing ships may at any time before that date, if their owners so choose, comply with Part II instead of Part III. Those that continue to comply with Part III are required, as part of the phasing in process referred to above, to fit certain items of equipment required under Part II, namely from 1st August 1993 with NAVTEX and satellite EPIRBs.

6. The 1980 regulations are revoked by these Regulations.