

IMO SUB-COMMITTEE ON NAVIGATION, COMMUNICATIONS, SEARCH AND RESCUE

Relevant for shipowners, managers, designers, manufacturers, and flag states.

July 2022

The 9th session of the IMO's Sub-committee on Navigation, Communications, Search and Rescue (NCSR 9) was held from 21 to 30 June. Navigation and voyage planning requirements for fishing vessels, pleasure yachts and small cargo ships operating in polar waters were finalized, as well as requirements to make inclinometers for the measurement of heel angles compulsory for container ships and bulk carriers. The performance standards for ECDIS were revised to accommodate the next generation of electronic navigational charts.



Meeting highlights

- Finalized draft of mandatory navigation and voyage planning requirements to non-SOLAS ships operating in polar waters
- Finalized draft of revised performance standards for Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS)
- Finalized draft of SOLAS amendments to make carriage of electronic inclinometers compulsory for container ships and bulk carriers
- Finalized draft of revised "Guidelines on places of refuge for ships in need of assistance"

Non-SOLAS ships in polar waters

Incidents in polar waters pose a risk to human life, to the polar environment and to search and rescue operations. The 2nd phase of the Polar Code development considers safety measures for fishing vessels, yachts and small cargo ships operating in polar waters.

NCSR 9 finalized draft amendments to SOLAS Chapter XIV and the Polar Code to mandate navigation and voyage planning requirements to non-SOLAS ships operating in polar waters, with entry into force on 1 January 2026. The requirements are applicable to:

- fishing vessels of 24 metres and above,
- pleasure yachts of 300 GT and above not engaged in trade, and
- cargo ships of 300 GT and above but below 500 GT.

The draft amendments are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2026, subject to approval and adoption by the MSC.

Guidelines on places of refuge for ships

Marine incidents may involve ships in need of assistance in waters beyond national jurisdictions. IMO resolution A.949(23) provides guidelines to assist flag states, masters, companies and salvors in responding effectively.

NCSR 9 finalized a draft revision of the "Guidelines on places of refuge for ships in need of assistance" to incorporate experiences and developments since its adoption in 2004.

A draft Assembly resolution containing the revised guidelines will be submitted to MSC 106 (November 2022) for approval and adoption.

Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)

Modernization of the GMDSS

The GMDSS is a worldwide system for communication of emergency and safety information. Amendments to SOLAS, its Protocol of 1988 and related IMO instruments to modernize the requirements to the GMDSS were adopted by MSC 105 (April 2022) and will enter into force on 1 January 2024.

The modernization implies generic requirements, independent of specific service providers, as well as removal of carriage requirements for obsolete systems and a re-organization of the SOLAS requirements to communication equipment. The definitions of the sea areas A1 to A4 have been amended to reflect that the geographical area of coverage may vary between various satellite service providers.

Accordingly, NCSR 9 approved revisions of the following COMSAR circulars:

- Harmonization of GMDSS requirements for radio installations on board SOLAS ships (COMSAR/Circ.32/Rev.1)
- GMDSS Coast Station Operator's Certificate (CSOC) syllabus (COMSAR/Circ.33/Rev.1)

It was agreed to consequentially revoke COMSAR/Circ.16, COMSAR/Circ.17, COM/Circ.110, COM/Circ.110/Corcc.1 and COM/Circ.117, from 1 January 2024.

The revised and revoked COMSAR circulars will be forwarded to MSC 106 (November 2022) for endorsement.

NCSR 9 furthermore agreed to the following draft MSC circulars:

- GMDSS operating guidance for ships in distress situations (superseding COM/Circ.108)
- Procedure for responding to DSC distress alerts by ships (superseding COMSAR/Circ.25)
- Guidance on distress alerts (superseding COMSAR/Circ.45)
- Guidance on alerting of search and rescue authorities (MSC.1/Circ.892/Rev.1)

The draft circulars will be submitted to MSC 106 (November 2022) for approval.

BeiDou Message Service System (BDMSS) in the GMDSS

NCSR 9 considered the International Mobile Satellite Organization's (IMSO) assessment report of the Chinese BeiDou Message Service System (BDMSS) for use in the GMDSS and noted that BDMSS could meet the criteria for the provision of mobile satellite communication systems in the GMDSS, as per resolution A.1001(25), subject to further confirmation and verification on-site.

A comprehensive list of outstanding issues was approved, comprising technical, operational and implementation issues to be addressed before China Transport Telecommunication Information Group Co., Ltd. (CTTIC) could be integrated into the GMDSS as a recognized mobile satellite service provider.

IMSO was invited to submit a report to MSC 106 (November 2022) regarding the on-site verification and the status of each outstanding technical and operational issue, as the basis for MSC's consideration of recognition of the BDMSS in the GMDSS.

Maritime Safety Information in the GMDSS

In addition to providing distress alerts, the GMDSS is also used to broadcast important Maritime Safety Information (MSI) to ships, such as navigational information and meteorological forecasts or warnings.

Since 1 January 2020, both Inmarsat (UK) and Iridium (USA) have been recognized for use in the GMDSS. NCSR 9 considered the dissemination and reception of search and rescue (SAR) and MSI-related information over multiple recognized mobile satellite services. The work will continue in a correspondence group until NCSR 10 (May 2023).

NCSR 9 finalized a draft second revision of the NAVTEX Manual (MSC.1/Circ.1403/Rev.1). The manual describes the structure and operation of the NAVTEX service, which is an international direct-printing service for promulgation of MSI and urgent safety-related messages to ships. The draft revision is expected to become effective on 1 January 2023, subject to approval by MSC 106 (November 2022).

NCSR 9 finalized a draft "Guidance for ships carrying large numbers of crew or passengers in the event of a multiple casualty evacuation". The guidance will be submitted to MSC 106 (November 2022) for approval.

Criteria for the provision of GMDSS services

NCSR 9 considered a revision of resolution A.1001(25) on "Criteria for the provision of mobile satellite communication systems in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)" to take into account experience gained.

The work will continue in a correspondence group until NCSR 10 (May 2023).

Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS)

NCSR 9 finalized a draft second revision of the "ECDIS guidance for good practice" (MSC.1/Circ.1503/Rev.1) to improve the unified implementation of ECDIS type approval when approving ECDIS's software and relevant updates. The revision also removes obsolete references to the Data Presentation and Performance Check (DPPC) dataset of IHO in relation to anomalies.

NCSR 9 finalized a draft revision of the "ECDIS performance standards" (resolution MSC.232(82)) to include references to the IHO product specifications S-98, S-100 and S-101 into the current performance standards to allow for the introduction of the next technical generation of Electronic Navigational Charts (S-101 ENC).

The revised performance standards will be applicable to ECDIS equipment installed on or after 1 January 2029. In a transitional period, from 1 January 2026 to 1 January 2029, ECDIS equipment may conform to either the current performance standards (resolution MSC.232(82)) or the newly introduced ECDIS performance standards based on S-101.

The draft guidance and performance standards will be forwarded to MSC 106 (November 2022) for approval and adoption, as appropriate.

Electronic inclinometers

Strong movement of ships at sea regularly causes the loss of lives and containers, and damage to bulk cargoes.

NCSR 9 finalized draft SOLAS amendments to make electronic inclinometers for the measurement of heel angles compulsory for container ships and bulk carriers of 3,000 gross tonnage and upwards. The draft requirements are not intended for cargo ships occasionally carrying cargoes in bulk and general cargo ships carrying containers on deck.

The amendments are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2026, subject to approval and adoption by the MSC.

Long-Range Identification and Tracking System (LRIT)

NCSR 9 agreed on the following draft amendments to improve the performance of the LRIT system for identification and tracking of ships:

- "Revised Performance standards and functional requirements for the long-range identification and tracking of ships" (resolution MSC.263(84), as amended)
- "Long-range identification and tracking system – Technical documentation (Part I)" (MSC.1/Circ.1259/Rev.8)

- “Guidance on the survey and certification of compliance of ships with the requirement to transmit LRIT information” (MSC.1/Circ.1307)
- “Continuity of service plan for the LRIT system” (MSC.1/Circ.1376/Rev.4)

The draft amendments will be submitted to MSC 106 (November 2022) for adoption and approval, as appropriate.

Any other business

Pilot transfer arrangements

NCSR 9 agreed to update a footnote in SOLAS regulation V/23.2.3 to refer to the updated ISO standard 799-1:2019 “Ships and marine technology – Pilot ladders”.

Recommendations

As NCSR is a Sub-Committee, all decisions concerning rules, regulations and dates are subject to further consideration and approval by the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC). DNV recommends that our customers monitor the outcome of MSC 106 in November 2022.

Contact

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