
Automatic Identification System (AIS) – use by small-craft

Notice to all owners/operators of small-craft.

Expiry Date 31.12.2005

This notice should be read in conjunction with MGN 277 (M+F)

Summary

This Note provides guidance on the use of AIS systems by small-craft.

AIS Class 'B' is being developed specifically for use by small-craft and the final specification is expected to be completed by mid-2005.

Receive-only AIS is currently available but it does not transmit own-vessel data for reception by other AIS equipped vessels.

1 Introduction/ Background

1.1 Together with other maritime administrations, the MCA has been considering suitable interim advice for small-craft on the application and use of AIS by vessels for which there is no statutory carriage requirement (broadly, it is sea-going ships that are required to carry AIS).

1.2 For a number of technical and operational reasons, the UK strongly recommends that small-craft users delay equipping their vessels with full AIS until the class of device that is currently under development specifically for their use becomes available – known as AIS Class 'B'.

2 Class 'A' AIS

2.1 Class 'A' AIS is designed for shipping and must be fitted to the majority of sea-going ships by 31 December 2004. Class 'A' AIS requires electronic inputs from the ship's "transmitting heading device" (THD), usually a gyro compass; and also an accurate input from a type-approved GPS.

2.2 Small-craft tend not to fit THDs or type-approved GPS. It is vital for the accuracy of ship-borne AIS receivers and for the integrity of shore AIS networks, that vessels transmit accurate and reliable data.

3 Use of AIS by small-craft

3.1 Some other European maritime administrations enforce restrictions on the voluntary fitting and use of Class 'A' AIS on small-craft by imposing radio licensing conditions. In the UK, use of AIS is incorporated into vessels' radio licences.

3.2 Receive-only type AIS devices (which do not transmit "own-vessel" position) are now on the market and Class 'B' AIS is in the latter stages of development. It is recommended that small-craft operators use either of these devices rather than opt for a class 'A' on-board system.

Further Information

Further information on the contents of this Notice can be obtained from:

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