



PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission
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COMMISSION ANNOUNCES REVISION OF PROCEDURES FOR ASSIGNING MARITIME MOBILE SERVICE IDENTITIES

On March 6, 1997, the Commission released a *Public Notice* announcing that it was considering revising its procedures for the assignment of maritime mobile service identities (MMSIs) by providing blocks of MMSIs to qualified entities for distribution to vessel operators.¹ An MMSI is a unique nine-digit number assigned by the Commission to commercial and recreational U.S. vessels participating in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). As required by treaty, the Commission assigns MMSIs in accordance with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Radio Regulations, and periodically notifies the ITU of assignments made to vessels traveling or communicating internationally. The MMSI serves as a "phone number" for the ship and must be programmed into the DSC radio by the user. Vessel owners need to obtain an MMSI prior to using a digital selective calling (DSC) radio or an INMARSAT ship earth station. MMSIs will also be used for shipborne universal automatic identification system (AIS) transponders.

Presently, the Commission assigns MMSIs through the ship station licensing process. This process requires applicants to file FCC Form 506, along with the appropriate fee, with the Commission. Vessels that are not required by law to carry a radio and do not make international voyages or communications are no longer required to obtain an individual license.² As a result, this method could mean unnecessary administrative burdens and processing delays for both the maritime community and the Commission. Thus, the Commission sought another method for assigning MMSIs to these exempt vessels.³

The purpose of this *Public Notice* is to announce that the Commission and the United States Coast Guard (Coast Guard) have developed a standard agreement to implement with private entities desiring to issue MMSIs. On November, 2000, the Commission and the Coast Guard entered into Memoranda of Agreement with BoatUS and on January, 2001, with MariTEL, to distribute MMSIs to

exempt vessel operators. Operators of exempt vessels interested in obtaining an MMSI can contact these

¹ FCC Seeks Comment Regarding Revision of Procedures for Assigning Maritime Mobile Service Identities, *Public Notice*, 13 FCC Rcd 9177 (1997).

² See Amendment of Parts 80 and 87 of the Commission's Rules to Permit Operation of Certain Domestic Ship and Aircraft Radio Stations Without Individual Licenses, WT Docket No. 96-82, *Report and Order*, 11 FCC 14849 (1996). Such vessels will be referred to herein as "exempt" vessels.

³ Vessels that are still required to obtain a license from the Commission shall at this time continue to receive MMSIs from the Commission through the licensing process.

entities at:

BoatUS
880 South Pickett Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22304
Elaine Dickinson
Phone 703-461-2864
www.boatus.com

MariTEL
365 Canal Street
Suite 3170
New Orleans, LA 70130
Angie Johnston
Phone 504-581-7876
Fax 504-581-7878
Email ajohnston@maritelusa.com
www.maritelusa.com

The Commission will continue to accept requests from entities that want to issue MMSIs. Interested parties should submit a non-binding letter of intent to the address below or via email to "mayday@fcc.gov". The letter should set forth a description of its organization, the procedures it will use for assigning MMSIs, the geographic areas it will serve, its fee structure, and a point of contact. Both the FCC and the U.S. Coast Guard may deny a request to issue MMSI numbers if there is question of the requesting entity's ability to fulfill all aspects of the service to both the public and the government. Such request should be sent to the following address.

Federal Communications Commission
Public Safety & Private Wireless Division
445 12th St., NW
Room 4-C342
Washington, DC 20554

For further information, please contact Jim Shaffer of the Commission's Public Safety and Private Wireless Division at (202) 418-0680, TTY (202) 418-7233.

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