



# PUBLIC NOTICE

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## WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUREAU PROVIDES ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE REGARDING JANUARY 20, 2016 DEADLINE FOR FISHING VESSELS AND SMALL PASSENGER VESSELS TO CARRY VHF DIGITAL SELECTIVE CALLING EQUIPMENT

The Wireless Telecommunications Bureau reminds owners and operators of fishing vessels (*i.e.*, commercial vessels that catch and/or process fish and other marine life<sup>1</sup>) of 300 gross tons and upward, and small passenger vessels (*i.e.*, ships that transport seven to twelve passengers for hire in the open sea or any adjacent tidewater of the United States<sup>2</sup>), that they must upgrade to VHF radiotelephone equipment that includes digital selective calling (DSC) capability no later than **January 20, 2016**. These vessels are exempt from the VHF-DSC carriage requirement until one year after the United States Coast Guard (USCG) notification to the Commission that shore-based Sea Area A1 coverage has been established.<sup>3</sup> On January 20, 2015, USCG notified the Commission that it had published a notice in the *Federal Register* declaring Sea Area A1 within twenty nautical miles seaward of the territorial baseline along the East, West, and Gulf coasts of the United States, excluding Alaska, and including Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the Northern Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the exemptions from the VHF-DSC carriage requirement for fishing vessels and small passenger vessels operating in those areas expire on January 20, 2016.

Licensees needing additional time to meet the VHF-DSC carriage requirement may file an application for an Exemption from Ship Station Requirements (ship exemption). Ship exemptions may be requested most expeditiously via the Commission's Universal Licensing System (ULS).<sup>5</sup> Licensees must provide justification for the exemption and include a date when the equipment will be installed.

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<sup>1</sup> *Waiver of Certain Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) Rules Applicable to Fishing Vessels and Small Passenger Vessels*, Order, 14 FCC RCd 528, 528 n.2 (1998). This includes fish tender vessels (*i.e.*, vessels that transport fish and materials to and from fishing vessels, fish processing vessels, and shore). See *Amendment of Parts 13 and 80 of the Commission's Rules Concerning Maritime Communications*, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making, 17 FCC Rcd 6741, 6748 para. 11 (2002).

<sup>2</sup> 47 CFR § 80.901.

<sup>3</sup> See 47 CFR §§ 80.905(a)(1), (a)(3), (a)(4), 80.1071(c).

<sup>4</sup> See *Fishing Vessels and Small Passenger Vessels in Certain Areas Must Upgrade to VHF Digital Selective Calling Equipment by January 20, 2016*, Public Notice, 30 FCC Rcd 3680, 3680 (WTB MD 2015) (citing Declaration of Sea Area A1, 80 Fed. Reg. 2722, 2723 (2015)).

<sup>5</sup> The URL for the ULS is <http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls/index.htm?job=home>. Licensees must log into the ULS and file an exemption request under Schedule G of FCC Form 605. The fee for filing an exemption is \$195.

The Commission's rules require Class A VHF-DSC equipment—which is intended for large, ocean-going ships to meet the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) requirements<sup>6</sup>—for satisfaction of this carriage requirement.<sup>7</sup> Also available, however, is Class D equipment—which is intended to provide minimum facilities for VHF DSC distress, urgency, and safety, as well as routing calling and reception, not necessarily in full accordance with GMDSS requirements for VHF installations.<sup>8</sup> Licensees may request a ship exemption to permit use of a Class D DSC radio in lieu of a Class A radio.<sup>9</sup> Licensees must provide justification for the exemption.

For further information, contact Tim Maguire of the Mobility Division, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, at (202) 418-2155, TTY (202) 418-7233, or via email at [tim.maguire@fcc.gov](mailto:tim.maguire@fcc.gov).

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<sup>6</sup> *Amendment of the maritime rules concerning the use of digital selective calling equipment*, Report and Order, 4 FCC Rcd 2030, 2030 para. 5 (1989).

<sup>7</sup> See 47 CFR § 80.1101(c)(2)(ii).

<sup>8</sup> Recommendation ITU-R M.493-14, Digital selective-calling system for use in the maritime mobile service, at Annex 2 (09/2015).

<sup>9</sup> A licensee may request additional time and authorization to carry Class D equipment in lieu of Class A equipment in the same ship exemption application.