

Spectrum Management

Client Procedures Circular

Maritime Mobile Service Identities (MMSI)

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Comments and suggestions may be directed to the following address:

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Attention: DOSP

Principle

Because each ship needs a unique identifier for safety and telecommunication purposes, the Radiocommunication Sector of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU-R) has recommended the adoption of an international system of automatic identification for all ships. Consequently, the ITU has adopted in its *Radio Regulations* the assignment and use of maritime mobile service identities (MMSI).

Mandate

Section 5(c) of the *Department of Communications Act* states that the Minister shall help Canadian communication systems adjust to changing domestic and international conditions.

Policy

General

With the new technologies now available, radiocommunication systems must be improved to meet the needs of licensees. MMSI and digital selective calling (DSC) numbers will meet those needs by speeding up ship-to-shore and intership communications, as well as communications between ships and the public switched telephone networks (PSTN). Therefore, in keeping with the ITU-R recommendation, the Department will, at the licensee's request, assign a MMSI to Canadian registered ships.

MMSI allow worldwide access, through the PSTN and INMARSAT, to ship stations equipped with automated radiocommunication systems. These systems include DSC, or alerting devices associated with the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), or both. Through the use of MMSI, ships will be able to place calls automatically and selectively to other ships via participating coast stations.

Procedure

General

There are four kinds of maritime mobile service identities:

- # ship station,
- # group ship station call,
- # coast station, and
- # group coast station call (not expected to be used in Canada).

Maritime mobile service identities are formed of a series of nine digits. Each MMSI contains the maritime identification digits (MID) as allocated to each country. The ITU has allocated 316 as the Canadian MID. Thus, all Canadian identities will have the MID 316 in their MMSI.

Ship Station Identities

Ship station identities are in the format M₁I₂D₃X₄X₅X₆X₇X₈X₉. The first three digits identify the country in which the ship is registered, while the last six digits identify the communication requirements of the ship station.

A ship station identity with one or more trailing zeros should be assigned only when a vessel may reasonably be expected to require it for automatic shore-ship communication. Such communication may be via MF, HF, VHF or UHF terrestrial radiocommunication or maritime satellite, but it should be capable of receiving communications from a land-based network without coast station operator assistance.

Ship station identities may take on four different formats:

- # Ship stations equipped only for terrestrial communication, operating in domestic waters and requiring coast station intervention to place calls, will have a 316XXXXXX identity.
- # Ship stations equipped for terrestrial communication with only national communication requirements, e.g., operating in domestic waters but not requiring coast station intervention to place calls, will have a zero as the last digit of their identity (e.g., 316XXXXX0).
- # Ship stations equipped for terrestrial communication with only regional communication requirements, e.g., operating in international waters and communicating only through coast stations of a certain group of countries, will have zeros as the last two digits of their identity (e.g., 316XXXX00).
- # Ship stations equipped for terrestrial communication, operating in international waters and communicating through coast stations of countries other than those which can be grouped in a regional scheme, will have zeros as the last three digits of their identity (e.g., 316XXX000).

Ship Earth Station Identities

Ship earth stations are issued identities whose last three digits are zeros (e.g., 316XXX000) to make them compatible with the existing INMARSAT identification system. The MMSI will eventually replace the INMARSAT number, but for now all ships currently issued an INMARSAT number should also have a MMSI assignment.

Note: While Government of Canada coast stations do not provide an automatic service at the moment, all Canadian registered ships equipped with an earth station will be eligible for a MMSI.

Furthermore, since ship earth stations are licensed as mobiles to the provider of INMARSAT services (CPC-2-6-06, *Guidelines for the Submission of Mobile Earth Station Applications*, refers) as opposed to the typical radiocommunication equipment authorized on a ship radio station licence, the applicant or licensee must inform the district office that its ship is or will soon be equipped with an earth station when requesting the assignment of a MMSI.

Group Ship Station Call Identities

Group ship station call identities, used for calling two or more ships simultaneously, have a zero in front of the digits identifying the country (e.g., 0316XXXXX).

Coast Station and Group Coast Station Call Identities

These station identities have two zeros preceding the country identifier (e.g., 00316XXXX).

Ships Transferred to the Canadian Registry

Ship owners holding a MMSI previously issued by another country of registry should apply for a Canadian MMSI upon transferring the ship to the Canadian registry. The non-Canadian MMSI must be returned to the former country of registry.