

Isle of Man Ship Registry Manx Shipping Notice

Voyage Data Recorders and Simplified Voyage Data Recorders

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1. Introduction

Voyage Data Recorders (VDRs) or Simplified Voyage Data Recorders (S-VDRs) are required in order to enable accident investigators to review procedures and instructions in the moments before, during and after a casualty and help to identify the cause of any casualty. The information may be used to compile a casualty report with the aim of improving maritime safety.

The information stored by this equipment is extensive and can be of great value for investigation and training purposes.

2. Application

VDRs are required on:

- All passenger ships
- Cargo ships of 3,000gt and over constructed on or after 1 July 2002

S-VDRs are required on:

- Cargo ships of 3,000gt and over constructed before 1 July 2002

3. Performance Standards

Performance Standards for VDRs and S-VDRs are specified by IMO and are as follows:

- S-VDRs – as per MSC.163(78), as amended by resolution MSC.214(81)
- VDRs installed on or after 1 July 2022 – as per MSC.333(90) as amended by MSC.494 (104)
- VDRs installed on or after 1 July 2014 – as per MSC.333(90)
- VDRs installed before 1 July 2014 – as per A.861(20), as amended by resolution MSC.214(81)
- VDRs installed on or after 1 June 2008 – as per A.861(20)

In addition, VDRs and S-VDRs must have a valid type-approval certificate.

4. VDR Familiarisation

Following recent casualty investigations and ISM audits, the Isle of Man Ship Registry ('IOMSR') wishes to remind Masters and ship's staff that they should be fully familiar with the following:

1. What data is recorded on the VDR/S-VDR;
2. How long it is recorded for before being overwritten, since this is dependent upon manufacturer/equipment type;
3. When to secure the recorded data in the event of an incident; and
4. How to correctly secure the recorded data.



IOMSR is aware of instances where, during an incident, ship's staff have initially overlooked the importance of securing the VDR/S-VDR data. When it is considered, it can be too late to recover the data or can consume valuable time if ship's staff have to refer to the manufacturer's manuals to determine how to correctly secure the data.

Companies and Masters should ensure that ship's staff are aware of the procedures for securing this information on the vessel's VDR/S-VDR equipment and that they can confidently demonstrate the process steps to attending inspectors when required. Ship's staff shall also be able to swiftly perform the 'secure data' function in an emergency situation. It should be noted that securing the data as part of demonstration or drill may reduce the available storage space.

During an extended incident and following the initial 'secure data' step, further 'secure data' time periods should be considered, such that a continuous record can be maintained as far as possible.

It is recommended that a ship specific procedure should be displayed in close proximity to the VDR/S-VDR for ease of reference by ship's staff in an emergency situation.

5. Ownership of VDR Data

Any data recorded on the VDR or S-VDR will belong to the ship owner. However, in the event of a casualty, the VDR or S-VDR data shall be made available to the investigator. The investigator will take custody of the VDR or S-VDR data in the same way that the investigator would have custody of other records or evidence under the Code for the Investigation of Marine Casualties and Incidents.

6. Testing and Servicing

It is recommended that VDRs and S-VDRs are regularly tested and serviced, in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

7. Reference Material:

Documents referred to in this MSN:

- MSC.163(78) – Performance Standards for Shipborne Simplified Voyage Data Recorders (S-VDRs)
- MSC.214(81) – Adoption of Amendments to the Performance Standards for Shipborne Voyage Data Recorders (VDRs) (Resolution A.861(20)) and Performance Standards for Shipborne Simplified Voyage Data Recorders (S-VDRs) (Resolution MSC.163(78))
- MSC.494(104) – Amendments to the Performance Standards for Shipborne Voyage Data Recorders (VDRs) (Resolution MSC.333(90))
- A.861(20) – Performance Standards for Shipborne Voyage Data Recorders (VDRs)
- SOLAS Chapter V – Safety of Navigation
- Merchant Shipping (SOLAS Chapter V)(Safety of Navigation) Regulations 2018

Most Regulations and notices are available on the Isle of Man Government website: www.iomshipregistry.com or by contacting marine.survey@gov.im



Please note - The Isle of Man Ship Registry cannot give legal advice. Where this document provides guidance on the law it should not be regarded as definitive. The way the law applies to any particular case can vary according to circumstances - for example, from ship to ship. You should consider seeking independent legal advice if you are unsure of your own legal position.

