

Port State Control – Information Notice No.3 of 2009

The purpose of this notice is to advise shipowners, operators, managers and Masters of Isle of Man registered ships of the following;

Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) monitoring & identified problems with Automatic Identification Systems (AIS)

The Ship Registry has recently received several communications from the Ship Safety Division of the See-Berufsgenossenschaft (SBG) in Germany where Isle of Man registered vessels have been reported as not complying with SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 19.2.4, and IMO Resolutions A.917(23) as amended by A.956(23). This primarily concerns the shipboard AIS system transmissions and the fact that the internal Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver would appear not to be functioning.

VTS is monitored by the German authority "Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie" (BSH), please refer to <http://www.bsh.de/en/index.jsp> , for further information.

Whenever irregularities with vessels AIS transmissions are observed the BSH forward an appropriate report to the German SBG. In many cases the SBG decide to pass the relevant information to the Flag State administration, instead of performing any additional Port State Control inspection on the concerned vessels.

We are led to understand from some manufacturers that the highlighted problem concerns the malfunction of the internal GPS receiver and that the AIS unit synchronises to the transmissions of other AIS stations which reduces the timing accuracy. Additionally no position redundancy will be available. If the external position sensor fails the AIS unit cannot use the internal GPS receiver and no position will be transmitted.

The difficulty we are now led to understand is this failure cannot normally be detected by the onboard user, and therefore how would the user know the vessel has a faulty AIS. All the Ship Registry can advise is that when your vessel is operating in a VTS area you could request that VTS to confirm they are receiving your shipboard AIS signal and relevant information.

All other reported failures, e.g. missing or wrong information for ships dimensions, IMO No. or MMSI No., etc....., probably do not need further explanations. Those static information deficiencies should be properly set up during the initial installation.

Furthermore the IMO are now receiving AIS discrepancy reports on vessels found to be transmitting incorrect AIS data. Analysis of the information shows that in the majority of cases the errors relate to the transmission of wrong IMO number, MMSI (Maritime Mobile Service Identity) and Call Sign and name for a particular ship. These deficiency items relate to fixed or static information, which is entered into the AIS on installation and need only be changed if the ship changes its name or undergoes a major conversion from one ship type to another.

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