

COMMITTEE ON BOATING AND YACHTING

Closure of Hong Kong Coast Radio Station

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to inform members of the arrangements after closure of the Hong Kong Coast Radio Station.

Introduction

2. The Hong Kong Coast Radio Station (**HKCRS**) provides the following maritime radio services by means of Single Side Band radio (**SSB**):

- a. Radio-telephony services between ship and shore;
- b. Broadcast of weather report of South China Sea; and
- c. Monitor of the calling / distress frequencies

3. Nowadays, ocean-going ships are equipped with advanced communication facilities under the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (**GMDSS**) and they do not use the traditional SSB radio for communication. The proposed closure of **HKCRS** will not cause impact to ocean-going ships. In fact, coast radio stations of some countries have ceased operation because of the diminishing demands.

4. In Hong Kong, there are currently 130 fishing vessels and 60 yachts equipped with licensed **SSB** radios¹.

¹ Source : Office of the Telecommunications Authority, Hong Kong

Implications

5. The closure of **HKCRS** gives rise to following implications:

- a. Provision of the radio-telephony services

The closure of **HKCRS** purports that vessels will be unable to make ship/shore telephone calls via the station. According to the provided information, the number of such telephone calls through **HKCRS** has dropped immensely to, an average of only 10 to 20 minutes daily. It is also reported that many vessels use satellite telephones or the radio telephony services provided by mainland coast radio stations.

b. Broadcast of Weather Report

Hong Kong Observatory (**HKO**) broadcasts weather reports 3 times daily through the **HKCRS** and the number of broadcasts will be increased to 4 times during the passage of a typhoon. **HKO** will continue the weather broadcast through other means after the closure of **HKCRS**.

c. Monitoring of Calling / Distress Frequencies

Offshore Hong Kong fishing vessels and yachts in distress use the **SSB** radio to call the **HKCRS** on either 2182 KHz or 4125 KHz, which relays the distress messages to the Hong Kong Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (**HKMRCC**). There were 7 and 2 recorded cases in the years of 2003 and 2004 respectively.

6. In 1992, the International Maritime Organisation (**IMO**) endorsed a resolution to revoke the listening watch on distress frequencies. The use of **GMDSS** was globally implemented on 1st February 1999.

7. The closure of **HKCRS** will have impacts on rendering assistance to fishing boats and yachts in distress unless these vessels are equipped with the **GMDSS** radio equipments.

Matters for Discussion

8. Members' views are sought on following issues:

a. Installation of Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (**EPIRB**)

Fishing boats and yachts engaged in offshore activities should install at least one Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (**EPIRB**), which is mandatory under **GMDSS**. The distress alert transmitted from **EPIRB**, when received by the Search and Rescue Satellite (**SARSAT**), will be passed automatically to the responsible Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre (**MRCC**).

In the case of vessel sinking or power failure, the **SSB** radio will become inoperative. The **EPIRB** has, however internal battery installed to be operative for 2 to 3 days; moreover, it is a self-floating device and transmits the distress signal automatically in waters without the need of manual operation.

b. Installation of Satellite Telephone

Offshore fishing vessels and yachts may install satellite telephones for communication and emergency/distress call.

c. Liaison with Guangdong Coast Radio Station (GDCRS)

Currently, the **GDCRS** remains operational. Offshore fishing vessels or yachts may acquire the radio telephony services through the **GDCRS**. **HKMRCC** will enhance the communication with the **GDCRS** to enable distress messages emitted from Hong Kong fishing vessels or yachts be relayed to **HKMRCC** speedily.

Presentation

9. Mr. K W CHAN, Senior Marine Officer/Search & Rescue will present the paper to members and enumerate the functions of **EPIRB** at the meeting.

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