

Proper Use of VHF Channels at Sea

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Sub: Proper Use of VHF Channels at Sea

Notice to Owners, Masters and Officers of Merchant Ships, Owners and Skippers of Fishing Vessels and Port Authorities.

1. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has noted with concern the widespread misuse of VHF channels at sea especially the distress, safety and calling Channels 16 (156.8 MHz) and 70 (156.525 MHz), and channels used for port operations, ship movement services and reporting systems. Although VHF at sea makes an important contribution to navigational safety, its misuse causes serious interference and, in itself, becomes a danger to safety at sea. IMO has asked Member Governments to ensure that VHF channels are used correctly.

2. All users of marine VHF on India vessels, and all other vessels in Indian territorial waters and harbours, are therefore reminded, in conformance with international and national legislation, marine VHF apparatus may only be used in accordance with the International Telecommunications Union's (ITU) Radio Regulations. These Regulations specifically prescribe that:

- i. Channel 16 may only be used for distress, urgency and very brief safety communications and for calling to establish other communications which should then be concluded on a suitable working channel
- ii. Channel 70 may only be used for Digital Selective Calling not oral communication;
- iii. On VHF channels allocated to port operations or ship movement services such as VTS, the only messages permitted are restricted to those relating to operational handling, the movement and the safety of ships and to the safety of persons;
- iv. All signals must be preceded by an identification, for example the vessel's name or callsign;
- v. The service of every VHF radio telephone station must be controlled by an operator holding a certificate issued or recognised by the station's controlling administration.
- vi. All the communication should be recorded in the requisition log book.

3. [Appendix I](#) to this notice consists of notes on guidance on the use of VHF at sea. Masters, Skippers and Owners must ensure that VHF channels are used in accordance with this guidance.

4. For routine ship-to-ship communications, the following channels have been made available in Indian waters: 6, 8, 72 and 77. Masters, Skippers and Owners are urged to ensure that all ship-to-ship communications working in these waters is confined to these channels, selecting that most appropriate in the light of local conditions at the time. VHF USER should ensure that no interference is caused and no infringement of ITU Rules takes place.

5. Channel 13 is designated for use on a worldwide basis as a navigation safety communication channel, primarily for intership navigation safety communications. It may also be used for the ship movement and port services.

Sd/-

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