
Information on Class "D" VHF radios

Notice to all Shipowners, Masters, Skippers and Pleasure boat users

This MIN expires 30 September 2010

Summary

This MIN clarifies the compliance standards for Class "D" VHF radios.

1. Background

- 1.1 A specific type of VHF Digital Selective Calling (DSC) radio was developed for use on smaller vessels, particularly leisure craft, this is known as Class "D". The concept behind the design of Class "D" equipment is defined by the ITU as "intended to provide minimum facilities for VHF DSC distress, urgency and safety as well as routine calling and reception".
- 1.2 Equipment standards have been published, internationally as IEC 62238, and in Europe as EN 301 025, which specify that Class "D" VHF must have the following features:
 - ◆ Distress
 - ◆ All ships Urgency/Safety
 - ◆ Individual Routine
 - ◆ Group Routine.

Short Range VHF operator training courses support these features.

2. Compliant Class "D" VHF radios

- 2.1 Unfortunately there are models of radio, described as Class "D", that are available for purchase which include additional features that do not comply with the international standards prescribed for Class "D".
These additional features may make the equipment confusing and difficult to operate without appropriate, additional training. The additional features include such functions as Distress relay, individual safety calls and urgency calls.
- 2.2 Before purchasing a Class "D" radio it is recommended that users check the product to ensure that it conforms to the international standards and that its functionality is limited to the DSC calls as described in section 1.2.

Internet purchasers dealing with suppliers outside the UK should note that their transaction deems them the “importer” and they may risk legal sanctions if the equipment does not conform to the relevant standards.

- 2.3 Retailers are encouraged to seek assurance from their suppliers that any Class “D” equipment supplied to them complies with the appropriate relevant standards and only has the functionality to perform the DSC calls as listed in section 1.2.
- 2.4 MCA advises the owners of small vessels including leisure craft to carry VHF DSC radio whenever possible. DSC is monitored by all Coastguard stations, and by all SOLAS vessels and most fishing vessels. Over half a million Class “D” radios have so far been produced and although simplistic in concept they have proved to be a valuable life saving tool.

More Information

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