



# Guidance Notes

## Ship Station Licence

### **INTRODUCTION**

The regulations governing use of maritime radio are mainly detailed in the International Radio Regulations, set by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the Communications Act 2006. It is an offence to install or use any radio equipment on board a Gibraltar registered ship, craft, hovercraft, lightship, oilrig or other ship predominantly moored in Gibraltar waters without a radio licence. A licence is required even if the transmitting equipment is not in constant use, or if it is used only for distress purposes.

These notes are designed to help you apply for a Ship Station Licence. The following notes cover types of equipment that are licensable, Accounting Authorities, Callsigns, Maritime Mobile Services Identities, Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs), Ship Security Alert Systems (SSAS), Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) Systems as well as other licensing information that you should know about when applying for a licence.

### **WHAT THE LICENCE COVERS**

The Ship Station Licence will allow you to use or keep any combination of maritime radio equipment. The Licence allows you to use:

- MF, HF, VHF Maritime Equipment;
- Satellite Communications Equipment (Ship Earth Stations);
- Radar;
- Low Powered On-board Communications Equipment;
- On-board Repeater Stations; and
- 406 MHz and 1.6 GHz Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs)
- Ship Security Alert Systems (SSAS)
- Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) Systems

The Licence will be valid for a period of one or five years unless surrendered by you or revoked. None of your equipment including safety equipment such as maritime 406 MHz and 1.6 GHz EPIRBs is licensed for use on land. You will need a Licence for EPIRB equipment, even if EPIRBs are the only type of Radio Equipment you choose to carry.

Your equipment will be authorised to operate on international maritime frequencies only. Details of the international maritime VHF channels that you will be licensed to use are shown in the enclosed notes.

## **EMERGENCY POSITION INDICATING RADIO BEACONS (EPIRBs)**

An Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) is a small self-contained battery-operated radio transmitter, the prime purpose of which is to alert the appropriate emergency service, and to assist in determining the location of boats, aircraft, and people in distress in emergency situations.

The 406 MHz EPIRBs must be coded with the Gibraltar allocated MMSI (MMSI) number of the vessel on which it is carried.

Strictly, they are radio beacons that interface with worldwide offered service of Cospas-Sarsat, the international satellite system for search and rescue (SAR) or through the INMARSAT geostationary satellites operating in the 1.6 GHz band.

("INMARSAT" means the Organisation established by the Convention on the International Maritime Satellite Organisation adopted on 3rd September 1976.)

("Cospas-Sarsat satellite service" means a satellite aided search and rescue system designed to locate distress beacons transmitting in the 406 MHz band and on other frequencies.)

("MMSI" means Maritime Mobile Service Identity, being a nine-digit identification number made up of the three-digit MID followed by a six-digit identification number.)

### **Information Required to Register EPIRBs**

The owner and the operator of every Gibraltar registered vessel shall ensure that every EPIRB carried on the ship (whether or not carried in compliance with statutory requirements) is registered with Gibraltar Regulatory Authority and that the registered particulars are correct. The registered particulars referred to in the application form are the following: —

- (a) Ship name;
- (b) MMSI;
- (c) Radio call sign;
- (d) EPIRB HEX code (if applicable) and its homing frequency;
- (e) Brief description of ship, including its type, gross tonnage, ship superstructure;
- (f) Name, address, telephone and (if applicable) telefax number of emergency contact person ashore;
- (g) Alternative 24-hour emergency telephone number (alternative contact ashore);
- (h) Capacity of ship for carrying persons on board (passengers and crew);
- (i) Radio installations carried on board the ship and survival craft; and
- (j) Type and number of survival craft;

## **Upon acquiring a (new) EPIRB**

Every 406 MHz EPIRB must be programmed/coded with two key items of information:

- The first item of information is the Maritime Identification Digits (MID) assigned to Gibraltar by the ITU. This three-digit code is 236 – followed by;
- The second item of information is the trailing six digits of the ship's Maritime Mobile Service Identification number (MMSI).
- This coding must be adhered to by the supplier of satellite EPIRBs being installed on board Gibraltar registered vessels.
- Each beacon has a Unique Beacon Identifier (HEX ID). The Hex ID is a 15 hexadecimal character string (valid range: numbers 0 through 9 and letters A through F), referred to as the beacon 15 Hex Identification, or 15 Hex ID. The beacon's 15-character Hex ID uniquely identifies the 406 MHz beacon and is encoded in the message the beacon transmits to search and rescue services when the beacon is activated. When the beacon is activated, satellites will detect the transmission and relay the distress alert to search and rescue services. The Hex ID should be found on a label affixed to the beacon or in the beacon documentation provided by the beacon manufacturer.

## **ACTIVATION**

- When an Application for a Ship Radio Station licence has been completed and a permanent Ship Radio Station License issued, the GRA relays this information to the ITU.

## **DE-ACTIVATION**

- If an EPIRB is lost, damaged, destroyed or otherwise rendered unusable and the beacon is replaced, the new beacon's 15 Hex ID must be submitted to the GRA and amended on the Ship Radio Station Licence. The GRA will update the ITU on the deletion and de-activation of the 'old' beacon's 15 Hex ID along with the new beacon's Hex ID.
- When a vessel leaves a Gibraltar registry, the GRA will automatically revoke the ship station licence and inform the ITU. It is the operator's responsibility to ensure that the EPIRB is re-coded in compliance with the new registering administration's policy.

## **DISPOSAL**

- When an EPIRB is disposed of, batteries must be disconnected, and all data erased to avoid accidental transmission of distress signals.

Certain information provided by you in the application form will be given to the ITU and port authorities to assist in the management of search and rescue services.

## **TYPE APPROVAL AND EQUIPMENT**

Your radio equipment must meet certain minimum performance standards. These require the equipment, for example, to operate in certain environmental conditions. The specifications are designed to avoid interference being caused to others and are an essential safety of life requirement. For example, non-type approved equipment might not work when it is required

to operate at sea or could cause interference to other equipment during rescue operations. It is in your personal interest that your equipment meets these operating specifications.

If you are in any doubt as to whether your apparatus meets the appropriate type approval specification you should contact the GRA.

You are strongly advised to ensure that your equipment is type approved maritime equipment and to check that the equipment you are about to purchase has passed the appropriate type approval tests before purchase.

## **CALLSIGNS**

A callsign will be allocated to your vessel when the radio equipment on the vessel is first licensed. It remains with the vessel even if there is a change of ownership or change of vessel name. Please note that vessels registered with the Gibraltar Port Authority, 'Red book', will not be allocated a call sign from the international set as these vessels cannot travel outside of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters.

Callsigns are non-transferable you must simultaneously inform the respective registry and the GRA of any change of name or details from one owner to another. Once licensed you must advise us if you decide to change the name of your vessel upon which the licensed apparatus is installed. You must then apply for an amended Licence by completing the amendment form available on the GRA's website. The reason for this is that for certain licensees who have arrangements with Accounting Authorities and travel internationally and make calls through foreign coast stations, this information must be notified to the ITU.

The GRA does not charge for amendments to a Ship Station Licence. However, transfer of ownership or the person/company responsible for the vessel in effect requires a new application to be submitted. You will be sent a new Licence document containing the new details. You will keep the existing callsign.

## **FOREIGN CALLS**

If it is your intention to travel internationally and make calls from abroad using a foreign coast station, the licensee must have first entered into a contract with a Gibraltar Registered Accounting Authority (AA)<sup>1</sup> and be able to quote the relevant Accounting Authority Identification Code (AAIC) to the coast station operator.

Coast stations will hold a copy of the ITU list of ship stations. This gives details of the Accounting Authority that the vessel is using as its agent for billing purposes. In turn, that Accounting Authority will invoice the licensee, for any call charges incurred. The ship station details will be sent to the ITU for inclusion in their list of ship stations when applying for or amending a licence.

Information on Accounting Authorities is available from the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gra.gi/communications/ship-station>

## **MARITIME MOBILE SERVICE IDENTITIES (MMSIs)**

An MMSI number is a unique 9-digit identification assigned to a vessel for use in Digital Selective Calling (DSC) alerting or EPIRB identification. To be issued with an MMSI, your vessel must be fitted with DSC equipment, an EPIRB, or a Ship Earth Satellite Station (SES). If you already have licensed radio equipment and wish to add an MMSI or MMSI Digital Selective Calling facility, you will need to contact the GRA and request an amendment to your licence. Your MMSI number will be added to the Ship Station Licence at no fee.

The ITU will be provided with details of your MMSI number that will also be made available to port authorities to assist in the operation of the safety and distress service.

If you already have an MMSI for use with DSC or EPIRB equipment and subsequently install a SES, you may be required to change the MMSI number in order to be able to communicate ship to shore and vice versa with various countries throughout the world. If a new MMSI is allocated, you will have to reprogram your DSC or EPIRB equipment.

## **Ship Security Alert System (SSAS)**

The Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) is part of the ISPS code and is a system that contributes to the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) efforts to strengthen maritime security and suppress acts of terrorism and piracy against shipping. The system is an IMO regulated system.

The SSAS is a type of silent ship security alarm system which, when activated, does not issue any audio-visual signal on the ship or to nearby vessels or security forces. The alert in most cases is first received by the ship's owner or an SSAS management third party, then passed to the ship's flag state, and these receivers are obliged to inform the national authorities of the coastal states where the ship is sailing.

When the maritime security staff suspects probable danger from pirates or terrorists, a Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) alert is triggered. The beacon transmits a specific security alert, with important details about the ship and its location, to the administration and to the owner, or appointed professional SSAS management and monitoring services.

On receiving the signal, the administration will notify the nearest national authorities of the area which will dispatch appropriate military or law-enforcement forces to deal with the terrorist or pirate menace.

When the Ship Security Alert System is activated, the following details will be sent to the administration:

- a) Name of ship,
- b) IMO number allotted to the ship,
- c) The Call Sign of the ship,
- d) The Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) position of the ship in latitude and longitude,
- e) Maritime Mobile Service Identity,
- f) Date and time of the alert according to the GNSS position (as per the current time and zone, the ship is sailing).

Once the SSAS is activated, the alert should be continuously transmitted to the administration or designated authority selected by the administration unless it is reset or deactivated.

### **Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT)**

The Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) system is a designated International Maritime Organization (IMO) system designed to collect and disseminate vessel position information received from IMO member states' ships that are subject to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

The main purpose of the LRIT ship position reports is to enable a contracting Government to obtain ship identity and location information in enough time to evaluate the security risk posed by a ship off its coast and to respond, if necessary, to reduce any risks.

### **SELECTIVE CALLING (SELCALL)**

A Selcall number is a code which when programmed into radio equipment will automatically alert that system for signals meant for that station only.

The allocation and usage is confined to commercial vessels and/or for business use. If approved, your Selcall number will be added to the List of Ship Stations published by the ITU and your Licence document. If you require a Selective Call number, you must specifically request this in the application form.

### **LICENCE FEES**

The licence fee is a payment covering a one- or five-year period. The fee depends on whether the vessel is used for solely pleasure or commercial purposes. There is a simple two-tier rate. One for commercial users, the other for solely pleasure users. Please also ensure that you forward the correct licence fee with your application. The incorrect amount will inevitably delay the processing of your application. Refunds will only be issued where there has been an overpayment, duplicate payment or when an application has been unsuccessful. Fee levels may vary year-to-year and are set by HM Government of Gibraltar.

### **REGISTERED OWNER**

The registered owner is responsible for the Ship Station Licence of his vessel. Any changes to the equipment, the vessel or his registered address should be advised in writing to the GRA. However, if the vessel is registered as a Bareboat Charter, then the company operating the vessel is responsible for the Ship Radio Licence and its renewal for the period of the charter. Once this period is over, the registered owner is again responsible for the equipment on board the vessel and its Ship Station Licence.

### **LOCAL CONTACT**

You need to appoint a local contact, i.e. agent, in Gibraltar in the event that the GRA should require to follow up any queries. This should be the same local contact as provided to the Ship or Yacht Registry.

The local contact details should be provided in Section A of the application form.

## **DEFINITION OF PLEASURE USE**

In relation to a Ship Station Licence, a vessel which is used solely for recreational purposes and not for trade or profit, and in respect of which the owner or user receives no payment in cash or in kind from any person other than as a contribution to the direct expenses, such as fuel, mooring fees etc., involved in the operation of the vessel during a voyage or excursion.

## **OTHER LICENSING INFORMATION**

### **Registration**

You need to register your vessel with the Ship Registry, Yacht Registry or Gibraltar Port Authority before a Ship Station Licence can be issued.

Gibraltar Ship Registry  
Watergate House  
2/8 Casemates Square  
P.O. Box 71  
Gibraltar  
Tel : +350 200 46861 (Administration Division)  
Fax : +350 200 47770  
Email: maritime.registry@gibraltar.gov.gi

Gibraltar Yacht Registry / Small Ship Registry  
Watergate House  
2/8 Casemates Square  
P.O. Box 71  
Gibraltar  
Tel : +350 200 78343  
Fax : +350 200 77044  
Email : maritime.yachts@gibraltar.gov.gi  
Gibraltar Port Authority  
Tel: +350 200 46254  
Fax: +350 200 51513  
Email: gpaenquiries@port.gov.gi

### **Other information**

If you have sold your vessel, please send details of the new owner's name and address. If you have purchased a new vessel, you will need to make a new application to obtain a new Licence. Licences do not transfer on change of vessel ownership.

You must provide in your application a registered Gibraltar address to which correspondence concerning the Licence can be sent. If you wish the Licence to be sent somewhere else, please indicate the mailing address separately on the application form.

You are advised to keep the Ship Station Licence documents with your equipment when you travel abroad. Foreign licensing administrations may confiscate the radio equipment where a valid Licence cannot be produced on demand.

## **AMATEUR RADIO STATIONS ABOARD GIBRALTAR SHIPS**

The establishment and use of amateur sending and receiving stations for radiocommunications on Gibraltar-registered ships is permitted under an Amateur Radio Licence. On a vessel the licensee shall:

- (a) Install, use or make changes to the station only with the written permission of the vessels master;
- (b) Observe radio silence on the advice of the vessel's master.

The full terms, provisions and limitations with which the licensee shall comply are available from the GRA.

## **ENQUIRIES**

Any enquiries about your application should be made to:

Gibraltar Regulatory Authority  
2nd Floor  
Eurotowers 4  
1 Europort Road  
Gibraltar  
GX11 1AA

Tel: +350 20074636 Email: [licensing@gra.gi](mailto:licensing@gra.gi) Fax: +350 20072166