
Maritime Safety and the Barring of INMARSAT Ship Earth Station Procedures

Notice to all Owners and Masters of Merchant Ships, Owners and Skippers of Fishing Vessels and users of INMARSAT Ship Earth Stations at Sea.

This notice supersedes Marine Guidance Note No. 139

Summary

This note advises about the potential consequences of non-payment for services provided to a ship by Land Earth Stations operating in the INMARSAT system.

Key Points:

- Failure to pay the LES for services will result, after prior notification, in an earth station being barred globally from INMARSAT communication services.
- The barring of a Ship Earth Station may prevent compliance with the provisions of the ship's safety certification.
- Ships with barred earth stations may be subject to enforcement action by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

1. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has been informed by INMARSAT of an increasing number of Ship Earth Station (SES) owners failing to pay for chargeable services.
2. The IMO has also been informed by INMARSAT, that failure to pay Land Earth Stations for chargeable services will result, after prior notification, in terminals being barred from using INMARSAT services. However, special arrangements (see paragraph 5) have been provided to minimise disruption to safety related communications.

Safety concerns

3. The IMO has set out concerns on this in Circular MSC/Circ.883. This requests administrations to confirm the operational status of an INMARSAT terminal, listed on the ship certificate, when undertaking inspections. The IMO has also requested Administrations to prevent a ship, which cannot comply with SOLAS because of the non-availability of requirements for satellite communication systems, from sailing.
4. The MCA has issued instructions to its surveyors when carrying out surveys or inspections of UK or foreign ships, to confirm that a test call can be made from the ship station.

In the event that it cannot, surveyors will check the status of the station with INMARSAT. If it has been barred surveyors will then establish the degree of compliance with SOLAS chapter IV. Ships unable to demonstrate an acceptable degree of compliance will be liable to enforcement action and if under survey will be refused a Safety Radio Certificate.

Special arrangements

5. INMARSAT has provided special arrangements that will enable a barred vessel to perform distress functions within the GMDSS (distress alerting and distress priority messaging). Nonetheless, transmission of a position in relation to a Search and Rescue (SAR) request for assistance via SafetyNET will be possible only by sending a priority 3 (Distress) request to a Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC).

6. Reception of marine Safety Information (MSI) via SafetyNET will not be affected.

Further Information

Further information on the contents of this Notice can be obtained from:

Navigation Safety Branch
Bay 2/29
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

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MCA Website Address: www.mcga.gov.uk

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