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**GUIDANCE FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF SEARCH AND RESCUE RELATED
INFORMATION THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL ENHANCED GROUP CALL SERVICE**

- 1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 106th session (2 to 11 November 2022), approved the *Guidance for the dissemination of search and rescue related information through the international enhanced group call service*, prepared by the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR), at its ninth session (21 to 30 June 2022), as set out in the annex.
- 2 The Guidance is addressed to search and rescue authorities requiring to disseminate information through mobile satellite services recognized for use in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).
- 3 Member States are invited to bring the annexed Guidance to the attention of search and rescue authorities and all other parties concerned.

ANNEX

GUIDANCE FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF SEARCH AND RESCUE RELATED INFORMATION THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL ENHANCED GROUP CALL SERVICE

General

1 This document provides guidance for the dissemination of search and rescue (SAR) related information through the international enhanced group call (EGC) service.

2 The guidance is addressed to SAR authorities requiring to disseminate SAR-related information in areas where ships are provided with equipment capable of receiving information through the international EGC service.

International EGC service

3 The international EGC service is the coordinated broadcast and automatic reception of maritime safety information (MSI) and SAR-related information via EGC, using the English language. EGC is the international broadcast of coordinated MSI and SAR-related information to a defined geographical area using a mobile satellite service recognized by IMO for use in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).

4 The following mobile satellite services are currently recognized by IMO for use in the GMDSS:

- .1 **International SafetyNET services** which provide the coordinated broadcast and automatic reception of MSI and SAR-related information via the **Inmarsat EGC system**, using the English language; and
- .2 **Iridium SafetyCast service** which provides the coordinated broadcast and automatic reception of MSI and SAR-related information via the **Iridium EGC system**, using the English language.

5 Relevant information on the use of these services, including information that should be disseminated through EGC, can be found in the *International SafetyNET services manual* (MSC.1/Circ.1364/Rev.2)¹ and the *Interim Iridium SafetyCast service manual* (MSC.1/Circ.1613/Rev.1).¹

6 Further services may also be recognized by the Organization in the future.

Dissemination of SAR-related information through EGC services

7 SAR authorities² should ensure that SAR-related information is appropriately disseminated through all EGC services providing coverage within the SAR regions under their responsibility. This will ensure that all ships navigating within those areas receive the information regardless of the type of EGC receiver installed on board.

¹ These Manuals are revised periodically. Readers should always refer to the latest revision in force.

² In the context of this guidance, "SAR authority" means the national responsible authority, administration or service coordinator for maritime SAR, as communicated in the Global SAR Plan module of GISIS.

8 SAR authorities requiring to disseminate information through EGC services should either:

- .1 establish arrangements with an existing authorized EGC information provider that can disseminate the information on their behalf; or
- .2 obtain an authorization from the IMO EGC Coordinating Panel to access EGC services directly, including through their designated rescue coordination centres (RCCs).

Establishing arrangements with an existing authorized EGC information provider

9 SAR authorities are not necessarily required to disseminate information directly through EGC services. SAR authorities with no access to EGC services may establish arrangements with an authorized EGC information provider (i.e. preferably another SAR authority already in receipt of a Certificate of Authorization, or a NAVAREA coordinator) that can disseminate the information on their behalf. In these cases, the SAR authority that originates the information is always responsible for any information that is disseminated by other authorized EGC information providers on their behalf.

10 Information on arrangements with an existing authorized EGC information provider should be communicated through the [Global SAR Plan](#) module of GISIS¹ and should be updated, as changes occur. In determining these arrangements, SAR authorities should first consult with the relevant RCCs, NAVAREA coordinator and the IMO EGC Coordinating Panel, as appropriate.

Obtaining an authorization to access EGC services directly

11 The processes for authorization, certification and registration of EGC information providers are described in annex 2 to the *IMO Enhanced Group Call Coordinating Panel* (MSC.1/Circ.1635). These processes have been established to protect the integrity of the international EGC service. This section complements the information and procedures for SAR authorities.

Authorization

12 In order to obtain authorization to broadcast SAR-related information through the international EGC service, SAR authorities should apply to IMO for approval to participate in the internationally coordinated service. Requests for authorization can be submitted electronically by email to ncsr@imo.org.

13 The request should originate from the SAR authority, as provided in the [Global SAR Plan](#), and should indicate the RCC(s) under their responsibility that will participate in the international EGC service.

14 Before applying, SAR authorities should ensure that the information contained in the [Global SAR Plan](#) is up to date, including the contact details of the SAR authority and their respective RCCs and SAR regions of responsibility.

¹ Modifications to the Global SAR Plan module of GISIS are being performed to accommodate this information. Until these modifications are implemented, SAR authorities should contact the IMO Secretariat for advice (ncsr@imo.org).

Certification

15 On receipt of IMO's authorization, the IMO EGC Coordinating Panel will issue a Certificate of Authorization to participate in the international EGC service directly to the SAR authority, providing also a copy to IMO, as well as to the recognized mobile satellite service provider(s) concerned. A specimen Certificate of Authorization is shown in MSC.1/Circ.1635, annex 2, section 5.

Registration

16 After receiving a Certificate of Authorization, the SAR authority should conclude an agreement with the recognized mobile satellite service provider(s) concerned, serving the required SAR regions, to obtain access to the system.

17 Information related to RCC(s) that participate in the international EGC service should be updated in the [Global SAR Plan](#) by the SAR authority concerned.

18 When changes are required, the SAR authority should determine, in consultation with the IMO EGC Coordinating Panel and the recognized mobile satellite service provider(s) concerned, as appropriate, which RCC(s) under their responsibility, or other entities, should participate in the international EGC service.

19 Recognized mobile satellite service providers should indicate the options available for accessing their international EGC services and should facilitate access to the necessary technical documentation. When special connection arrangements are required, these should be agreed with the recognized mobile satellite service provider(s) concerned. The IMO EGC Coordinating Panel should be notified of these arrangements.

20 Recognized mobile satellite service providers should only register RCCs or other entities that are designated by the SAR authority holding a Certificate of Authorization. For this purpose, recognized mobile satellite service providers should use the information made available in the [Global SAR Plan](#).

21 SAR authorities should keep the [Global SAR Plan](#) updated throughout all the stages of testing and implementation of EGC services, or when services become operational or are temporarily suspended. This will facilitate providing a dynamic global status of RCCs participating in the international EGC service.

Additional duties and responsibilities

22 SAR authorities should:

- .1 coordinate any required changes in international EGC service use with the IMO EGC Coordinating Panel;
- .2 ensure that designated RCC(s), or other entities, under their responsibility that participate in the international EGC service are correctly equipped and their personnel appropriately trained to perform the necessary functions; and
- .3 maintain the information updated in the [Global SAR Plan](#), as and when changes are planned or occurred.

- 23 Recognized mobile satellite service providers should:
- .1 facilitate training on the use of their international EGC services and organize appropriate testing before enabling the dissemination of information through their EGC services;
 - .2 provide relevant information concerning the use of international EGC services in the technical documentation produced (i.e. manuals approved by IMO, application programming interface (API) standards and/or other additional software or technical documentation);
 - .3 specify the communication protocols and processes for accessing their international EGC services, as well as the minimum requirements that should be complied with before enabling the dissemination of information;
 - .4 in order to safeguard the system, temporarily disable access to the services when the minimum necessary arrangements are not complied with or in cases of improper use, and consider denial of access to their service(s) if prompt action is not taken to resolve; and
 - .5 report to the IMO EGC Coordinating Panel any issues related to inappropriate or incorrect use of the international EGC services and associated suspension or denial of access.
- 24 The IMO EGC Coordinating Panel should:
- .1 serve as the coordinator for the review and authorization of new applications from SAR authorities to participate in the international EGC service;
 - .2 monitor participation of SAR authorities and RCCs via the reports from NAVAREA coordinators and recognized mobile satellite service providers; and
 - .3 perform periodic reviews of Certificates of Authorization to ensure currency and validity.
- 25 In order to safeguard the international EGC service, all system users should adhere to the guidance presented in this document.
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