

MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS - VHF EXCHANGES

Any conversation at sea, i.e. a ship-to-ship, ship-to-shore or shore-to-ship exchange, consists of the following stages:

1. MAKING
CONTACT

2. EXCHANGE OF MESSAGES

3. END
PROCEDURE

1. Making Contacts

If the name of the ship or station being called is unknown, the following *making contact* procedure is recommended by SMCP (Standard Marine Navigational Phrases 1997) and SEASPEAK (1985):

CALLING STATION:

All ships, all ships, all ships (in sea area ...)
Calling *unknown ship in position:
bearing: 1-8-5 degrees from Punta
Stella distance: 4.6 miles.
This is Newhaven Radio. I-O-4- N.
Over.

*or: Calling unknown ship.
Type: Container ship: hull colour: blue, funnel: red. ...

RESPONDING STATION:

Newhaven Radio, I-O-4- N.
This is Sea Urchin, N-W-F-9, in position:
bearing: 1-8-5 degrees from Punta
Stella, distance: 4.6 miles. Over.

In the *making contact* stage it is usually necessary for one station to indicate the working channel and the other to agree to it, e.g.:

CALLING STATION:

Sea Urchin, This is
Newhaven Radio.
Switch to VHF Channel two -
two.
Over.

RESPONDING STATION:

Newhaven Radio, This is Sea
Urchin,
Agree VHF channel two - two.
Over

If the name of a ship or station is known (i.e. its name and call sign), the recommended *making contact* procedure is as follows:

CALLING STATION:

Pontebba, I - Q - W - T,
Pontebba, I - Q - W - T.
This is Sea Urchin, N-W-F-9,
Sea Urchin, N-W-F-9,
on VHF channel one - six.
Over.

RESPONDING STATION:

Sea Urchin, N-W-F-9.
This is
Pontebba, I - Q - W - T.
Over.

2. Exchange of Messages

In the message exchange procedure the following *message markers* (i.e. words introducing the content and purpose of the message) are:

Message Marker	Answer to Message Marker
<i>QUESTION</i>	<i>ANSWER</i>
<i>INSTRUCTION</i>	<i>(INSTRUCTION RECEIVED)</i>
<i>ADVICE</i>	<i>(ADVICE RECEIVED)</i>
<i>REQUEST</i>	<i>(REQUEST RECEIVED)</i>
<i>INFORMATION</i>	<i>(INFORMATION RECEIVED)</i>
<i>WARNING</i>	<i>(WARNING RECEIVED)</i>
<i>INTENTION</i>	<i>(INTENTION RECEIVED)</i>

Examples:

QUESTION: What are your intentions?	ANSWER: I intend to alter course to starboard
WARNING: Buoy number: one - five unlit	WARNING RECEIVED: Buoy number: one - five unlit
ADVICE: You must anchor clear of fairway	ADVICE RECEIVED: I shall anchor clear of fairway
INFORMATION: The fairway entrance is: position: bearing 1-3-7 degrees true from North Point Lighthouse, distance: 2 decimal 3 miles	INFORMATION RECEIVED: The fairway entrance is: position: bearing 1-3-7 degrees true from North Point Lighthouse, distance: 2 decimal 3 miles
REQUEST: Please supply bunkers: quantity: 3 thousand metric tonnes	REQUEST RECEIVED: Supply bunkers: quantity: 3 thousand metric tonnes
INSTRUCTION: Steer course two - two -	INSTRUCTION RECEIVED: I shall

three degrees true. reason: to comply with traffic separation scheme	steer course two - two - three degrees true to comply with traffic separation scheme
INTENTION: I intend to reduce speed, new speed: eight knots	INTENTION RECEIVED: You intend to reduce speed, new speed: eight knots

For further information on message exchanges, e.g. communications on arrival at a port, berthing and unberthing, etc. see units 18-23.

3. End Procedure

In the end procedure the conversation is terminated, by confirming the previous turn: *UNDERSTOOD* or by saying: *NOTHING MORE* or *GOING BACK TO CHANNEL ONE SIX* or *I'LL GIVE YOU A CALL BACK WHEN ON BUOY DELTA ONE TWO*, and by adding a polite greeting:

HAVE A GOOD WATCH

HAVE PLEASANT VOYAGE TO

Finally, the closing phrase *OUT* or *OVER AND OUT* is used; e.g.:

CALLING STATION	RESPONDING STATION
Seaside VTS. This is Pontebba. Your message understood. Nothing more. Thank you. Have a pleasant voyage to Ceuta. Over.	
	Pontebba. This is Seaside VTS. Thank you. Have a good watch. Over and out.

For further information and practising maritime VHF communications see SEASPEAK 1985, SMNV 1977/1985 and SMCP 1997.

A. Comprehension & vocabulary

A.1 Which terms from those listed have been defined in the following examples?

- *station* • *sound signalling* • *transmitting station* • *procedure*
- *code sign* • *visual signalling* • *receiving station* • *addressee*

1. _____ : any method of communication where the transmission of transmitters/receivers can be seen;
2. _____ : any method of passing Morse signals by means of a siren, whistle, a foghorn, a bell, or other sound apparatus;
3. _____ : identity signal, i.e. group of letters and figures assigned to each station (shipborne or shore-based) by the authorities;
4. _____ : a ship, aircraft, survival craft or any place at which communication can be effected by any means;
5. _____ : the station from which a signal is actually being sent;
6. _____ : the authority to whom a signal is addressed;
7. _____ : the station by which a signal is actually being read, decoded, or received;
8. _____ : a set of rules drawn up for the conduct of signalling.

A.2 insert the most suitable terms:

- *true* • *letter* • *day* • *preceded* • *degrees* • *bearings* • *indicating*
- *minutes* • *date* • *year* • *figures* • *midnight* • *month* • *hours*

1. Azimuths or _____ are to be expressed in three figures denoting _____ from 000 to 359 measured clockwise. If there is any possibility of confusion they should be _____ by the letter "A". Bearings are always to be _____ bearings.
2. Dates are to be signalled by two, four or six figures preceded by the _____ "D". The first two figures indicate the _____ of the month. When they are used alone they refer to the current _____. For example, D15 transmitted on the 15th or any other _____ in April means "15 April": The two figures which follow indicate the month of the _____.
3. Times are to be expressed in four _____ of which the first two denote the _____ (from 00: _____ up to 23 = 11 p.m.), and the last two denote the _____ (from 00 to 59). The figures are preceded by:
 1. the letter "T" _____ local time, or
 2. the letter "Z" indicating Universal time Coordinated (UTC).

A.3 Give the Italian equivalents for the following:

Weather Notation:

b	= blue sky (0-2/8 clouded)	_____
bc	= sky partly clouded	_____
c	= cloudy (6-B/B clouded)	_____
d	= drizzle	_____
e	= wet air (without precipitation)	_____
f	= fog	_____
g	= gale	_____
h	= hail	_____

ip	= precipitation in sight of ship or station	_____
kq	= line squall	_____
ks	= storm of drifting snow	_____
kz	= sandstorm or dust storm	_____
l	= lightning	_____
m	= mist	_____
o	= overcast sky (The sky completely covered with a uniform layer of thick or heavy cloud)	_____
n	= squally weather	_____
r	= rain	_____
rs	= sleet (rain and snow together)	_____
s	= snow	_____
t	= thunder	_____
t/r	= thunderstorm with rain	_____
t/s	= thunderstorm with snow	_____
u	= ugly, threatening sky	_____
v	= pure air; abnormal visibility	_____
w	= dew	_____
x	= hoarfrost	_____
y	= dry air	_____
z	= haze	_____

A.4 Supply the missing words:

- antenna • operator • radios • station • alarm • distress
- transmitter • emergency • transmission • radiotelephone
- auto-alarm • signal • dashes • seconds • minutes • intervals
- distress

Communications equipment

The ships 1. _____ acts as an efficient ground and it can receive lightning discharges, which can damage the radio or endanger the radio

2. _____ .

In such cases the antennas should be brought down and the ships

3. _____ shut down until the storm passes.

The portable lifeboat 4. _____ are equipped with an automatic 5. _____ signal transmitter and 6. _____ .

The 7. _____ is adjusted to a frequency of 500/2182 kHz for "Automatic 8. _____ ".

Vessels in danger transmit alarm messages via radiotelegraph or 9. _____ to call attention to the 10. _____ .

The radiotelegraph alarm 11. _____ places into operation the 12. _____ of vessels which carry them. It consists of a series of 12

13. _____ transmitted in one minute. The duration of each dash is 4 14.

_____ with a one second between two 4 consecutive dashes. The 15.

_____ signal for the radio consists of two tones transmitted alternately in 16.

_____ of 30 seconds to one 17. _____ .

A.5 Answer the following questions:

1. What does communication at sea involve?
2. What are the various ways to communicate at sea?
3. What are maritime communications used for?
4. Which of the traditional communicational means/devices are still used on board?
5. How are most communications carried out today?
6. What is the modern language of the sea?
7. What is this standardized language called?
8. What is "Seaspeak"?

B. Grammar

B.1 Supply a suitable form of the verb in brackets and place it into the sentence:

Communications on board ship by internal telephone system, voice pipes and portable shipboard transceivers (*convey*). Engine orders from the bridge by phone or by means of the ship's telegraph (*pass*). Communications over short distances can be by visual or sound signals (*make*). Visual signals by using flags of the ICS or an Aldis lamp for messages in the Morse Code (*send, flash*). Flags can in combinations of two, three or four letters (*hoist*). Communications over long distances by radio (*send*). English for voice communications at sea (*use*). IMO the language at sea called the Standard Marine Navigational Vocabulary (*standardize*). This language for marine voice communication worldwide (*recommend*).

B.2 Supply the required preposition:

Safety at sea (INMARSAT)

When things at sea sometimes go wrong, then you need communications, fast. Every INMARSAT ship earth station is fitted 1. _____ a special alert mechanism 2. _____ cope 3. _____ emergency situations.

A distress alert immediately seizes a telephone, telex or data communications channels and connects it automatically 4. _____ a coast earth station 5. _____ a rescue Coordination Centre 6. _____ action. Distress alerts have top priority

7. _____ all other sorts 8. _____ communication, and the connection is always made immediately, regardless 9. _____ the location 10. _____ the emergency or the distance 11. _____ the coast earth station and Rescue Coordination Centre. IMO has made satellite communications a cornerstone 12. _____ the Global Maritime Distress Safety System (GMDSS), which was introduced 13. _____ 1991. Under the GMDSS a ship earth station (SES) will satisfy regulatory Communications requirements 14. _____ ships operating 15. _____ almost all parts 16. _____ the world, apart 17. _____ the extreme polar regions.

B.3 Give the Phonetic Transcription equivalents for the Phonetic Alphabet below:

PHONETIC ALPHABET

Letter	Word	Pronounced as
A	<i>Alfa</i>	<i>AL FAH</i>
B	<i>Bravo</i>	<i>BRAH VOH</i>
C	<i>Charlie</i>	<i>CHAR LEE</i> or <i>'SHAR LEE</i>
D	<i>Delta</i>	<i>DELL TAH</i>
E	<i>Echo</i>	<i>ECK OH</i>

F	<i>Foxtrot</i>	<i>FOKS TROT</i>
G	<i>Golf</i>	<i>GOLF</i>
H	<i>Hotel</i>	<i>HOH 'TELL</i>
I	<i>India</i>	<i>IN DEE AH</i>
J	<i>Juliett</i>	<i>JEW LEE ETT</i>
K	<i>Kilo</i>	<i>KEY LOH</i>
L	<i>Lima</i>	<i>LEE MAH</i>
M	<i>Mike</i>	<i>MIKE</i>
N	<i>November</i>	<i>NO'VEM BER</i>
O	<i>Oscar</i>	<i>OSS CAH</i>
P	<i>Papa</i>	<i>PAH PAH</i>
Q	<i>Quebec</i>	<i>KEH BECK</i>
R	<i>Romeo</i>	<i>ROW ME OH</i>
S	<i>Sierra</i>	<i>SEE 'AIR RAH</i>
T	<i>Tango</i>	<i>TANG GO</i>
U	<i>Uniform</i>	<i>YOU NEE FORM or '00 NEE FORM</i>
V	<i>Victor</i>	<i>VI K TAH</i>
W	<i>Whiskey</i>	<i>WISS KEY</i>
X	<i>X-ray</i>	<i>EKS RAY</i>
Y	<i>Yankee</i>	<i>YANG KEY</i>
Z	<i>Zulu</i>	<i>ZOO LOO</i>

C. Translation

C.1 Translate into English:

Segnali a una lettera

1. A -Ho un palombaro/sommozzalore in immersione; mantenetevi lontano da me e procedete adagio.
2. B - Sto imbarcando, o scaricando, o trasportando merci pericolose.
3. C -Sì, affermativo.
4. D - Mantenetevi lontano da me; sto manovrando con difficoltà.
5. E - Sto accostando a dritta.
6. F - Sono in avaria; comunicate con me.
7. G -Richiedo un pilota; (*peschereccio*) Sto issando le reti.
8. H - Ho il pilota a bordo.
9. I - Sto accostando a sinistra.
10. J - Ho un incendio a bordo e trasporto merci pericolose; mantenetevi lontano da me.
11. K - Desidero comunicare con voi.
12. L - Fermate immediatamente la vostra nave
13. M - La mia nave è ferma e senza attrivio.
14. N - No, negative.
15. O -Uomo in mare.
16. P - (*In porto*) Tutti debbono tornare a bordo: la nave è in procinto di partire.
(*In mare*) Le mie reti si sono impigliate in un ostacolo.
17. Q - La mia nave è indenne e chiedo libera pratica.
18. R - Ho ricevuto il vostro ultimo segnale.

19. S -Le mie macchine stanno andando indietro.
20. T - Mantenetevi lontano da me; sono impegnato in operazioni di pesca a due battelli.
21. U - State andando verso un pericolo.
22. W- Chiedo assistenza medica.
23. X - Suspendete quello che state facendo e fate attenzione ai miei segnali.
24. Y - La mia ancora sta arando.
25. Z - Richiedo un rimorchiatore; sto calando le reti.