



STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS.

S.I. No. 125 of 2026



MERCHANT SHIPPING (RADIO) RULES 2026

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I, SEÁN CANNEY, Minister of State at the Department of Transport, in exercise of the powers conferred on me by section 15 (inserted by section 8 of the Merchant Shipping Act 2010 (No. 14 of 2010)) of the Merchant Shipping (Safety Convention) Act 1952 (No. 29 of 1952) (as adapted by the Transport, Tourism and Sport (Alteration of Name of Department and Title of Minister) Order 2020 (S.I. No. 351 of 2020)) and the Transport (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2025 (S.I. No. 144 of 2025) and after consultation with the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport (as adapted by the Telecommunications (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2025 (S.I. No. 237 of 2025) and the Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Alteration of Name of Department and Title of Minister) Order 2025 (S.I. No. 236 of 2025)), and for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of Chapter IV of the annex to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, hereby make the following rules:

Citation

1. These Rules may be cited as the Merchant Shipping (Radio) Rules 2026.

Definitions

2. In these Rules—

“AIS-SART” means an automatic identification system search and rescue transmitter capable of operating on frequencies dedicated for AIS (161.975 MHz (AIS1) and 162.025 MHz (AIS2));

“bridge-to-bridge communications” means safety radiocommunications between ships from the position from which the ships are normally navigated;

“cargo ship” means a ship which is not a passenger ship;

“constructed”, in respect of a ship, means a stage of construction where:

- (a) the keel is laid;
- (b) construction identifiable with a specific ship begins; or
- (c) assembly of that ship has commenced comprising at least 50 tonnes or 1 per cent of the estimated mass of all structural material, whichever is less;

“continuous radio watch” means that the radio and listening watch concerned shall not be interrupted other than for brief intervals when the ship’s receiving capability is impaired or blocked by its own communications or when the facilities are under periodical maintenance or checks;

“Digital selective calling” (“DSC”) means a technique using digital codes which enables a radio station to establish contact with, and transfer information to, another station or group of stations, and complying with the relevant

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recommendations of the International Telecommunication Union Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R);

“Emergency position-indicating radio beacon” (“EPIRB”) means a transmitter operating in the frequency band 406.0–406.1 MHz capable of transmitting a distress alert via satellite to a rescue coordination centre and transmitting signals for on-scene locating;

“fishing vessel” means any sea-going ship or boat registered in the State, of any nature whatsoever, irrespective of the form of ownership, used or intended to be used for the purpose of commercial fishing;

“general radiocommunications” means communications other than distress, urgency and safety communications;

“Global Maritime Distress and Safety System” (“GMDSS”) means a system that performs the functions set out in Rule 5;

“GMDSS identities” means information which may be transmitted to uniquely identify the ship or its associated rescue boats and survival craft. These identities are the ship’s call sign, Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI), EPIRB hexadecimal identity, recognized mobile satellite service identities and equipment serial numbers;

“HF” means high frequency, the frequency spectrum between 3000 kHz and 30 MHz;

“IMO” means International Maritime Organization;

“locating” means the finding of ships, aircraft, survival craft or persons in distress;

“Maritime safety information” (“MSI”) means navigational and meteorological warnings, meteorological forecasts and other urgent safety-related messages broadcast to ships;

“MF” means medium frequency, the frequency spectrum between 300 kHz and 3000 kHz;

“partially smooth waters” means the waters of the areas specified in column 3 of the Schedule to the Merchant Shipping (SOLAS V – Safe Manning and Watchkeeping) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 314 of 2023), with the restriction, if any, as to time and type of vessel specified in that column in relation to those waters;

“passenger ship” means a ship which carries more than 12 passengers;

“pleasure craft” means a vessel primarily used for sport or recreation;

“radar SART” means a search and rescue transponder operating on radar frequencies in the frequency band 9.2–9.5 GHz;

“radio log-book” means the record kept in accordance with Rule 17;

“Radio Regulations” means the Radio Regulations complementing the Constitution and Convention of the International Telecommunication Union which is in force at any given time;

“recognized mobile satellite service” means any service which operates through a satellite system and is recognized by the IMO, for use in GMDSS;

“rules for life-saving appliances” means rules made, from time to time, by the Minister under section 82 of the Merchant Shipping Act 2010 (No. 14 of 2010);

“Safety Convention” means the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea signed in London on behalf of the Government on 1 November 1974, together with the Protocol to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea signed in London on behalf of the Government on 17 February 1978 and the Protocol to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea signed in London on behalf of the Government on 11 November 1988 and any amendments made to it up to and including those adopted by the 106th session of the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization held between 2 and 11 November 2022 and which have entered into force in respect of the State pursuant to Article VIII of the Convention prior to the enactment of the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Accidents) Act 2025 (No. 2 of 2025);

“satellite service on 406 MHz” means a service operating through a satellite system having global availability designed to detect EPIRBs transmitting in the frequency band 406.0–406.1 MHz;

“sea area A1” means an area within the radiotelephone coverage of at least one very high frequency (VHF) coast station in which continuous DSC alerting is available;

“sea area A2” means an area, excluding sea area A1, within the radiotelephone coverage of at least one medium frequency (MF) coast station in which continuous DSC alerting is available;

“sea area A3” means an area, excluding sea areas A1 and A2, within the coverage of a recognized mobile satellite service supported by the ship earth station carried on board, in which continuous alerting is available;

“sea area A4” means an area outside of sea areas A1, A2 and A3;

“sea-going” means going beyond the limits of smooth and partially smooth waters;

“ship earth station” means a mobile earth station in the maritime mobile-satellite service located on board a ship;

“smooth waters” means the waters of the areas specified in column 2 of the Schedule to the Merchant Shipping (SOLAS V – Safe Manning and Watchkeeping) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 314 of 2023), with the restriction, if any, as to time and type of vessel specified in that column in relation to those waters;

“survival craft” means a craft capable of sustaining the lives of persons in distress from the time of abandoning a ship;

“VHF” means very high frequency, being the frequency spectrum between 30 MHz and 300 MHz.

Application

3. (1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), these Rules apply to—

- (a) ships registered in the State, and
- (b) other sea-going ships while they are within any port in the State.

(2) These Rules shall not apply to sea-going ships registered in the State while such ships are being navigated within the Great Lakes of North America and their connecting and tributary waters as far east as the lower exit of the St. Lambert Lock at Montreal in the Province of Quebec in Canada.

(3) These Rules shall not apply to—

- (a) troopships;
- (b) ships not propelled by mechanical means;
- (c) pleasure craft;
- (d) fishing vessels;
- (e) subject to Rule 7(2), cargo ships of less than 300 gross tonnage;
- (f) Class D ships to which the European Union (Passenger Ships) Regulations 2019 (S.I. No. 676 of 2019) apply.

(4) No provision in these Rules shall prevent the use by any ship, survival craft or person in distress, of any means at their disposal to attract attention, make known their position and obtain help.

Exemptions

4. (1) Subject to paragraph (2), the Minister may, having taken into account the effect that an exemption may have on the general efficiency of the service for the safety of all ships, exempt any Irish ship that complies with Rule 5 from the requirements of Rules 7 to 11.

(2) An exemption under paragraph (1) shall not be granted to a ship unless—

- (a) the Minister is satisfied that the conditions affecting safety are such as to render the application of Rules 7 to 11 to the ship unreasonable or unnecessary, or
- (b) there are exceptional circumstances justifying the exemption for a single voyage outside the sea area for which the ship is equipped.

Functional requirements

5. A sea-going ship shall be capable of—

- (a) performing the GMDSS functions, which are as follows:
 - (i) transmitting ship-to-shore distress alerts by at least two separate and independent means, each using a different radiocommunication service;
 - (ii) receiving shore-to-ship distress alert relays;

- (iii) transmitting and receiving ship-to-ship distress alerts;
 - (iv) transmitting and receiving search and rescue coordinating communications;
 - (v) transmitting and receiving on-scene communications;
 - (vi) transmitting and receiving signals for locating;
 - (vii) receiving MSI;
 - (viii) transmitting and receiving urgency and safety communications;
 - (ix) transmitting and receiving bridge-to-bridge communications; and
- (b) transmitting and receiving general radiocommunications.

Installation, location and control of radio equipment

6. (1) A ship shall be provided with radio installations that comply with—
- (a) the functional requirements specified in Rule 5, and,
 - (b) unless exempted under Rule 4,
 - (i) the requirements of Rule 7 and,
 - (ii) where applicable, the requirements of either Rule 8, 9, 10 or 11.
- (2) A radio installation shall be—
- (a) located in such a way that no harmful interference of mechanical, electrical or other origin affects its proper use, and that electromagnetic compatibility is ensured and harmful interaction avoided with other equipment and systems;
 - (b) so located as to ensure the greatest possible degree of safety and operational availability;
 - (c) protected against harmful effects of water, extremes of temperature and other adverse environmental conditions;
 - (d) provided with reliable, permanently arranged electrical lighting, independent of the main and emergency sources of electrical power, for the adequate illumination of the radio controls for operating the radio installation; and
 - (e) clearly marked with the GMDSS identities, as applicable, for use by the radio installation operator.
- (3) (a) Control of the VHF radiotelephone channels, required for navigational safety, shall be immediately available on the navigation bridge convenient to the conning position and, where necessary, facilities shall be available to permit radiocommunications from the wings of the navigation bridge.
- (b) Portable VHF equipment may be used for the purposes of meeting the latter provision of subparagraph (a).

(4) In a passenger ship, a distress panel shall be installed at the conning position, which shall—

- (a) contain either one single button which, when pressed, initiates a distress alert using all radio installations required on board for that purpose or one button for each individual installation;
- (b) clearly and visually indicate whenever any button or buttons have been pressed; and
- (c) be provided with means to prevent inadvertent activation of the button or buttons referred to in subparagraphs (a) and (b).

(5) In a passenger ship, if an EPIRB is used as the secondary means of distress alerting and is not remotely activated from the distress panel, it shall be acceptable to have an additional EPIRB installed in the wheelhouse near the conning position.

(6) In a passenger ship, a distress alarm panel shall be installed at the conning position which—

- (a) shall provide visual and aural indication of any distress alert or alerts received on board;
- (b) shall indicate through which radiocommunication service the distress alerts have been received; and
- (c) may be combined with the distress panel referred to in paragraph (4).

Radio equipment for ships

7. (1) A ship shall be provided with—

- (a) a VHF radio installation capable of transmitting and receiving, for distress, urgency and safety communications purposes—
 - (i) DSC on the frequency 156.525 MHz (channel 70). It shall be possible to initiate the transmission of distress alerts on channel 70 from the position from which the ship is normally navigated; and
 - (ii) radiotelephony on the frequencies 156.300 MHz (channel 6), 156.650 MHz (channel 13) and 156.800 MHz (channel 16);
- (b) a radio installation capable of maintaining a continuous DSC watch on VHF channel 70 which may be separate from, or combined with, that required by subparagraph (a);
- (c) a radar SART or an AIS-SART, which—
 - (i) shall be so stowed that it can be easily utilized; and
 - (ii) may be one of those required by paragraphs (3)(a) or (4)(a);
- (d) a receiver or receivers capable of receiving MSI and search and rescue related information throughout the entire voyage in which the ship is engaged;

- (e) an EPIRB which shall be—
 - (i) installed in an easily accessible position;
 - (ii) ready to be manually released and capable of being carried by one person into a survival craft;
 - (iii) capable of floating free if the ship sinks and of being automatically activated when afloat; and
 - (iv) capable of being activated manually; and
- (f) a radio installation capable of transmitting and receiving general radiocommunications operating on working frequencies in the band between 156 MHz and 174 MHz. This requirement may be fulfilled by the addition of this capability in the equipment required by subparagraph (a).

(2) A cargo ship of at least 150 tons but less than 300 tons registered in the State shall be provided with—

- (a) at least two portable and waterproof VHF radiotelephony units, and
- (b) at least two search and rescue radar transponders,

that conform to the requirements of the rules for life-saving appliances.

(3) A cargo ship of 300 gross tonnage and upwards but less than 500 gross tonnage shall be provided with at least—

- (a) one radar SART or AIS-SART; and
- (b) two two-way VHF radiotelephone apparatuses.

(4) Every passenger ship and every cargo ship of 500 gross tonnage and upwards shall be provided with at least—

- (a) one radar SART or AIS-SART on each side of the ship; and
- (b) three two-way VHF radiotelephone apparatuses.

(5) The two-way VHF radiotelephone apparatuses required by paragraphs (3)(b) and (4)(b) may be portable or fitted in survival craft. The portable apparatus may be stored on the bridge.

- (6) (a) (i) The radar SARTs or AIS-SARTs required by paragraphs (3)(a) or (4)(a) shall be stowed in such locations that they can be rapidly placed in any survival craft other than a life raft required by Safety Convention regulation III/31.1.4.
- (ii) Alternatively, one radar SART or AIS-SART shall be stowed in each survival craft other than a life raft required by Safety Convention regulation III/31.1.4.
- (b) On a ship carrying at least two radar SARTs or AIS-SARTs and equipped with free-fall lifeboats, one of the radar SARTs or AIS-SARTs shall be stowed in a free-fall lifeboat and the other shall be located in the immediate vicinity of the navigating bridge so that it can be utilized on board and ready for transfer to any of the

other survival craft, other than a life raft required by Safety Convention regulation III/31.1.4.

(7) A passenger ship shall be provided with means for two-way on-scene radiocommunications for search and rescue purposes using the aeronautical frequencies 121.5 MHz and 123.1 MHz from the position from which the ship is normally navigated. These means may be portable.

Additional radio equipment for sea area A1

8. (1) In addition to meeting the requirements of Rule 7, a ship engaged on a voyage in sea area A1 shall be provided with a radio installation capable of initiating the transmission of ship-to-shore distress alerts from the position from which the ship is normally navigated, operating either:

- (a) through the satellite service on 406 MHz;
- (b) if the ship is engaged on voyages within coverage of MF coast stations equipped with DSC, on MF using DSC;
- (c) on high frequency (HF) using DSC; or
- (d) through a recognized mobile satellite service ship earth station.

(2) The requirement in paragraph (1)(a) may be fulfilled by installing:

- (a) the EPIRB required by Rule 7(1)(e) close to the position from which the ship is normally navigated, but in a location whereby it can still float free of the ship in an emergency;
- (b) the EPIRB required by Rule 7(1)(e) elsewhere on the ship, provided that this EPIRB has a means of remote activation which is installed near the position from which the ship is normally navigated; or
- (c) a second EPIRB near the position from which the ship is normally navigated.

Additional radio equipment for sea area A2

9. (1) In addition to meeting the requirements of Rule 7, a ship engaged on a voyage within sea area A2 shall be provided with—

- (a) an MF radio installation capable of transmitting and receiving, for distress, urgency and safety communications purposes, on the frequencies:
 - (i) 2,187.5 kHz using DSC; and
 - (ii) 2,182 kHz using radiotelephony;
- (b) a radio installation capable of maintaining a continuous DSC watch on the frequency 2,187.5 kHz which may be separate from, or combined with, that required by subparagraph (a); and
- (c) a secondary means of initiating the transmission of ship-to-shore distress alerts by a radio service other than MF operating either:

- (i) through the satellite service on 406 MHz;
- (ii) on HF using DSC; or
- (iii) through a recognized mobile satellite service ship earth station.

(2) It shall be possible to initiate transmission of distress alerts by the radio installations specified in paragraphs (1)(a) and (1)(c) from the position from which the ship is normally navigated.

- (3) The requirement in paragraph (1)(c)(i) may be fulfilled by installing—
- (a) the EPIRB required by Rule 7(1)(e) close to the position from which the ship is normally navigated, but in a location whereby it can still float free of the ship in an emergency;
 - (b) the EPIRB required by Rule 7(1)(e) elsewhere on the ship, provided that this EPIRB has a means of remote activation which is installed near the position from which the ship is normally navigated; or
 - (c) a second EPIRB near the position from which the ship is normally navigated.

(4) A ship shall, in addition, be capable of transmitting and receiving general radiocommunications by either—

- (a) a radio installation operating on working frequencies in the bands between 1,605 kHz and 4,000 kHz or between 4,000 kHz and 27,500 kHz. This requirement may be fulfilled by the addition of this capability in the equipment required by paragraph (1)(a); or
- (b) a recognized mobile satellite service ship earth station.

Additional radio equipment for sea area A3

10. (1) In addition to meeting the requirements of Rule 7, a ship engaged on a voyage within sea area A3 shall be provided with:

- (a) a recognized mobile satellite service ship earth station capable of:
 - (i) transmitting and receiving distress, urgency and safety communications;
 - (ii) initiating and receiving distress priority calls; and
 - (iii) maintaining watch for shore-to-ship distress alert relays, including those directed to specifically defined geographical areas;
- (b) an MF radio installation capable of transmitting and receiving, for distress, urgency and safety communications purposes, on the frequencies:
 - (i) 2,187.5 kHz using DSC; and
 - (ii) 2,182 kHz using radiotelephony;

- (c) a radio installation capable of maintaining a continuous DSC watch on the frequency 2,187.5 kHz which may be separate from, or combined with, that required by paragraph (1)(b); and
- (d) a secondary means of initiating the transmission of ship-to-shore distress alerts by a radio service operating either:
 - (i) through the satellite service on 406 MHz;
 - (ii) on HF using DSC; or
 - (iii) through any recognized mobile satellite service on an additional ship earth station.

(2) It shall be possible to initiate transmission of distress alerts by the radio installations specified in paragraphs (1)(a), (b) and (d) from the position from which the ship is normally navigated.

(3) The requirement in paragraph (1)(d)(i) may be fulfilled by installing:

- (a) the EPIRB required by Rule 7(1)(e) close to the position from which the ship is normally navigated, but in a location whereby it can still float free of the ship in an emergency;
 - (b) the EPIRB required by Rule 7(1)(e) elsewhere on the ship, provided that this EPIRB has a means of remote activation which is installed near the position from which the ship is normally navigated; or
 - (c) a second EPIRB near the position from which the ship is normally navigated.
- (4) (a) In addition, a ship shall be capable of transmitting and receiving general radiocommunications by either—
- (i) a recognized mobile satellite service ship earth station; or
 - (ii) a radio installation operating on working frequencies in the bands between 1,605 kHz and 4,000 kHz or between 4,000 kHz and 27,500 kHz.
- (b) The requirements in subparagraphs (a)(i) and (ii) may be fulfilled by the addition of this capability in the equipment required by paragraph (1)(a) or (b), respectively.

Additional radio equipment for sea area A4

11. (1) In addition to meeting the requirements of Rule 7, a ship engaged on a voyage within sea area A4 shall be provided with—

- (a) an MF/HF radio installation capable of transmitting and receiving, for distress, urgency and safety communications purposes, on all distress, urgency and safety frequencies in the bands between 1,605 kHz and 4,000 kHz and between 4,000 kHz and 27,500 kHz—
 - (i) using DSC; and
 - (ii) using radiotelephony;

- (b) equipment capable of maintaining DSC watch on 2,187.5 kHz, 8,414.5 kHz and on at least one of the DSC frequencies 4,207.5 kHz, 6,312 kHz, 12,577 kHz or 16,804.5 kHz; it shall be possible at any time to select any of these DSC frequencies for distress, urgency and safety communications purposes. This equipment may be separate from, or combined with, the equipment required by subparagraph (a); and
- (c) a secondary means of initiating the transmission of ship-to-shore distress alerts through the satellite service on 406 MHz.

(2) In addition, a ship shall be capable of transmitting and receiving general radiocommunications by a radio installation operating on working frequencies in the bands between 1,605 kHz and 4,000 kHz and between 4,000 kHz and 27,500 kHz. This requirement may be fulfilled by the addition of this capability in the equipment required by paragraph (1)(a).

(3) It shall be possible to initiate transmission of distress alerts by the radio installations specified in paragraphs (1)(a) and (c) from the position from which the ship is normally navigated.

(4) The requirement in paragraph (1)(c) may be fulfilled by installing either—

- (a) the EPIRB required by Rule 7(1)(e) close to the position from which the ship is normally navigated, but in a location whereby it can still float free of the ship in an emergency;
- (b) the EPIRB required by Rule 7(1)(e) elsewhere on the ship, provided that this EPIRB has a means of remote activation which is installed near the position from which the ship is normally navigated; or
- (c) a second EPIRB near the position from which the ship is normally navigated.

Radio watches

12. (1) Every ship, while at sea, shall maintain a continuous radio watch for distress, urgency and safety communications purposes—

- (a) on VHF DSC channel 70;
- (b) on DSC frequency 2,187.5 kHz, if the ship, in accordance with the requirements of Rule 9(1)(a) or 10(1)(b), is fitted with an MF radio installation;
- (c) on DSC frequencies 2,187.5 kHz and 8,414.5 kHz and also on at least one of the DSC frequencies 4,207.5 kHz, 6,312 kHz, 12,577 kHz or 16,804.5 kHz, appropriate to the time of day and the geographical position of the ship, if the ship, in accordance with the requirements of Rule 11(1)(b), is fitted with an MF/HF radio installation. This watch may be kept by means of a scanning receiver; and

- (d) for satellite shore-to-ship distress alert relays, if the ship, in accordance with the requirements of Rule 10(1)(a), is fitted with a recognized mobile satellite service ship earth station.

(2) Every ship, while at sea, shall maintain a radio watch for broadcasts of MSI and search and rescue related information on the appropriate frequency or frequencies on which such information is broadcast for the area in which the ship is navigating.

(3) Every ship, while at sea, shall maintain, when practicable, a continuous listening watch, which shall be kept at the position from which the ship is normally navigated, on—

- (a) VHF channel 16; and
- (b) other appropriate frequencies for urgency and safety communications for the area in which the ship is navigating.

Sources of energy

13. (1) While a ship is at sea, a supply of electrical energy shall be available at all times sufficient to operate the radio installations and to charge any batteries used as part of a reserve source or sources of energy for the radio installations.

- (2) (a) A reserve source or sources of energy shall be provided on every ship, to supply radio installations, for the purpose of conducting distress, urgency and safety communications, in the event of failure of the ship's main and emergency sources of electrical power.
- (b) The reserve source or sources of energy shall be capable of simultaneously operating the VHF radio installation required by Rule 7(1)(a) and, as appropriate for the sea area or sea areas for which the ship is equipped, either the MF radio installation required by Rule 9(1)(a) or 10(1)(b), the MF/HF radio installation required by Rule 11(1)(a) or the ship earth station required by Rule 10(1)(a) and any of the additional loads mentioned in paragraphs (3), (4), and (7) for a period of at least—
 - (i) one hour on ships provided with an emergency source of electrical power, if such source of power complies fully with all relevant provisions of Safety Convention regulation II-1/42 or 43, including the supply of such power to the radio installations;
 - (ii) six hours on ships not provided with an emergency source of electrical power complying fully with all relevant provisions of Safety Convention regulation II-1/42 or 43, including the supply of such power to the radio installations; and
 - (iii) in the case of vessels to which the Safety Convention does not apply, the equivalent provisions that shall apply in the place of Safety Convention regulation II-1/42 or 43 are as follows:

- (I) Rules 43 and 45 of the Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction) Rules 1983 (S.I. No. 300 of 1983) and Rules 46, 47 and 48 of the Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction and Survey) Rules 1985 (S.I. No. 274 of 1985) for passenger ships of Class II(A),
- (II) Rule 55 of the Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ships) Rules 2020 (S.I. No. 640 of 2020) for new passenger ships within the meaning of those Rules having been constructed on or after 1 July 1998 (other than high-speed passenger craft to which the European Union (Passenger Ships) Regulations 2019 (S.I. No. 676 of 2019) apply) of less than 24 metres in length, constructed of steel or aluminium, and
- (III) Rules 6, 7, 8 and 41(4) of the Merchant Shipping (Cargo Ship Construction and Survey) Rules 1983 (S.I. No. 301 of 1983) and Rules 45, 46 and 47 of the Merchant Shipping (Cargo Ship Construction and Survey) Rules 1985 (S.I. No. 276 of 1985) for sea-going cargo ships of 500 tons or over registered in the State.

- (c) The reserve source or sources of energy need not supply independent HF and MF radio installations at the same time.
- (d) The reserve source or sources of energy shall be independent of the propelling power of the ship and the ship's electrical system.

(3) Where, in addition to the VHF radio installation, two or more of the other radio installations referred to in paragraph (2)(b) can be connected to the reserve source or sources of energy, they shall be capable of simultaneously supplying, for the period specified, as appropriate, in paragraph (2)(b)(i) or (ii), the VHF radio installation and—

- (a) all other radio installations which can be connected to the reserve source or sources of energy at the same time; or
- (b) whichever of the other radio installations will consume the most power, if only one of the other radio installations can be connected to the reserve source or sources of energy at the same time as the VHF radio installation.

(4) The reserve source or sources of energy may be used to supply the electrical lighting required by Rule 6(2)(d).

(5) Where a reserve source of energy consists of a rechargeable accumulator battery or batteries—

- (a) a means of automatically charging such batteries shall be provided which shall be capable of recharging them to minimum capacity requirements within 10 hours; and

- (b) the capacity of the battery or batteries shall be checked, using an appropriate method, at intervals not exceeding 12 months, when the ship is not at sea.
- (6) The siting and installation of accumulator batteries which provide a reserve source of energy shall be such as to ensure—
- (a) the highest degree of service;
 - (b) a reasonable lifetime;
 - (c) reasonable safety;
 - (d) that battery temperatures remain within the manufacturer's specifications, whether under charge or idle; and
 - (e) that when fully charged, the batteries will provide at least the minimum required hours of operation under all weather conditions.
- (7) If an uninterrupted input of information from the ship's navigational or other equipment to a radio installation required by these Rules, including the navigation receiver referred to in Rule 18, is needed to ensure its proper performance, means shall be provided to ensure the continuous supply of such information in the event of failure of the ship's main or emergency source of electrical power.

Performance standards

14. Radio equipment required under these Rules shall—
- (a) meet the requirements of the performance standards adopted by the IMO, and
 - (b) in the case of Irish ships, meet the requirements of the European Union (Marine Equipment) Regulations 2017 (S.I. No. 177 of 2017).

Maintenance requirements

15. (1) Equipment referred to in these Rules shall be so designed that the main units can be replaced readily, without elaborate recalibration or readjustment.
- (2) Where applicable, equipment shall be so constructed and installed that it is readily accessible for inspection and onboard maintenance purposes.
- (3) Adequate information shall be provided to enable the equipment to be properly operated and maintained.
- (4) Adequate tools and spares shall be provided to enable the equipment to be maintained.
- (5) Radio equipment required by these Rules shall be maintained to provide the availability of the functional requirements specified in Rule 5 and to meet the recommended performance standards of such equipment.

(6) Where a ship, to which these Rules apply, is at sea, a person who is qualified within the meaning of Rule 16(1) and nominated by the master of the ship shall carry out the tests and checks specified in Schedule 1.

(7) On ships engaged on voyages in sea areas A1 or A2, the availability required by paragraph (5) shall be ensured by using such methods as duplication of equipment, shore-based maintenance or at-sea electronic maintenance capability, or a combination of these.

(8) On ships engaged on voyages in sea areas A3 or A4, the availability required by paragraph (5) shall be ensured by using a combination of at least two methods such as duplication of equipment, shore-based maintenance or at-sea electronic maintenance capability.

(9) While all reasonable steps shall be taken to maintain the equipment in efficient working order to ensure compliance with all the functional requirements specified in Rule 5, malfunction of the equipment for providing the general radiocommunications required by Rule 5(b) shall not be considered as making a ship unseaworthy or as a reason for delaying the ship in ports where repair facilities are not readily available, provided the ship is capable of performing all distress, urgency and safety functions.

(10) EPIRBs shall be—

- (a) annually tested, either on board the ship or at an approved testing station, for all aspects of operational efficiency, with special emphasis on checking the emission on operational frequencies, coding and registration, at intervals as specified below:
 - (i) on passenger ships, within three months before the expiry date of the Passenger Ship's Certificate or the Passenger Ship Safety Certificate; and
 - (ii) on cargo ships, within three months before the expiry date, or within three months before or after the anniversary date, of the Cargo Ship Safety Radio Certificate; and
- (b) subject to maintenance at intervals not exceeding five years, to be performed at an approved shore-based maintenance facility.

Radio personnel

16. (1) Every ship shall carry personnel qualified for distress, urgency and safety communications purposes in compliance with—

- (a) the Wireless Telegraphy (Ship Station Radio Licence) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 414 of 2006),
- (b) the Wireless Telegraphy (Maritime Radio Operator) (Certificates of Competency) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 8 of 2010), and
- (c) the European Union (Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 242 of 2014).

(2) The personnel shall be holders of the appropriate certificates specified in the Radio Regulations; one of the personnel shall be designated as having primary responsibility for communications during distress incidents.

(3) In a passenger ship, at least one person qualified in accordance with paragraphs (1) and (2) shall be assigned to perform only communications duties during distress incidents.

Radio log-book

17. (1) A record (a “radio log-book”) shall be kept on board, including the particulars specified in Schedule 2 and as required by the Radio Regulations, of all incidents connected with the radiocommunication services which appear to be of importance to safety of life at sea.

(2) The radio log-book required by paragraph (1) shall be retained on board for a period of at least two years.

Position-updating

18. (1) All two-way communication equipment carried on board a ship to which these Rules apply and which is capable of automatically including the ship’s position in the distress alert shall be automatically provided with this information from an internal or external navigation receiver.

(2) In case of malfunction of the internal or external navigation receiver, the ship’s position and the time at which the position was determined shall be manually updated at intervals not exceeding four hours, while the ship is under way, so that it is always ready for transmission by the equipment.

Revocations

19. The following are revoked:

- (a) the Merchant Shipping (Radio) Rules 1992 (S.I. No. 224 of 1992);
- (b) the Merchant Shipping (Radio) Rules 2018 (S.I. No. 452 of 2018).

SCHEDULE 1

Rule 15(6)

Equipment tests and reserve power checks

1. Daily

- (a) The proper functioning of the DSC facilities shall be tested at least once daily without radiation of signals by use of the means provided by the equipment.
- (b) Batteries providing a source of energy for any part of the radio installations shall be tested daily and, where necessary, brought up to the fully charged condition.
- (c) Where the reserve source of energy is not a battery, the reserve source of energy shall be tested daily.

2. Weekly

The proper operation of the DSC facilities shall be tested at least once a week by means of a live test call when within communication range of a coast radio station fitted with DSC equipment. Where a ship has been out of communication range of a coast radio station fitted with DSC equipment for a period of longer than one week, a test call shall be made on the first occasion that the ship is within communication range of such a coast radio station.

3. Monthly

- (a) An EPIRB and an EPIRB participating in a satellite service on 406 MHz shall be tested at least once a month to determine its capability to operate properly using the means provided on the device and without using the satellite system.
- (b) A search and rescue radar transponder shall be checked at least once a month for security and signs of damage.
- (c) A survival craft two-way VHF equipment shall be tested at least once a month on a frequency other than 156.800 MHz (VHF channel 16).
- (d) A check shall be made at least once a month on the security and condition of all batteries (including the battery connections and compartment) providing a source of energy for any part of a radio installation.

SCHEDULE 2

Rule 17(1)

Radio log-book

The following shall be recorded in a radio log-book:

- (a) the time, source and summary of content of a communication relating to distress, urgency and safety traffic;
- (b) the occurrence and time of important radio service incidents;
- (c) subject to paragraph (d), the position, at least once a day, of the ship and the time at which it was in that position;
- (d) where a ship is under way and does not carry the equipment specified in Rule 18(1), the position of the ship and the time at which that position is determined at intervals not exceeding 4 hours;
- (e) the date and time of performance of the equipment tests and reserve power checks specified in Schedule 1.

GIVEN under my hand,
1 April, 2026.

SEÁN CANNEY,
Minister of State at the Department of Transport.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Instrument and does not purport to be a legal interpretation.)

These Rules give effect to amendments to Chapter IV of the annex to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS Convention), adopted by the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization (IMO MSC), up to and including amendments adopted at the 105th session of the IMO MSC which came into force on 1 January 2024. The Rules concern radiocommunication services and ship requirements for carriage of radiocommunications equipment. The Rules revoke the Merchant Shipping (Radio) Rules 1992 (S.I. No. 224 of 1992) and the Merchant Shipping (Radio) Rules 2018 (S.I. No. 452 of 2018).

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