Procedure

Theft of MMSI-Programmed Devices from Vessels Licensed by Rule

Draft 2.1

30 January 2025

Issue

Petty theft of small devices (such as handheld radios) presents an issue for the proper identification of parties in distress. Theft may also occur on a larger scale, such as theft of an entire vessel, with contents (e.g., fixed VHF/DSC, AIS, ancillary handheld units) removed and used illegally or parsed out for sale illegally.

Stolen devices programmed with Mobile Maritime Service Identities (MMSIs) can create confusion for Search and Rescue forces due to ownership data not matching the physical location of the emitting device. Obviously, the loss of property is a crime.

Existence of a properly recorded MMSI also creates a unique assist to law enforcement in the recovery of said devices.

This procedure assumes that the victim obtains, registers and enters a new MMSI into a radio purchased to replace the stolen one. The procedure cannot be used if the user retails the old MMSI. However, information concerning the stolen radio could be entered into the registration remarks field, at the discretion of the service agent and the victim.

Recommended Actions

Recommendation 1: Service Agent web sites should proactively post guidance for potential victims stating that a police report must be obtained, and the Service Agent notified of the theft. The underlying reasoning (see Recommendation 5) is not to be included in the statement. Service Agents should also have internal procedures in place for this eventuality.

Recommendation 2: When the theft of equipment is discovered, the offended party should contact local authorities to report the theft. A police report should be generated for receipt and retention by the victim.

Recommendation 3: Service Agents should change the name of the vessel/device/devices to suitable warning language such as STOLEN HANDHELD or STOLEN VESSEL (other phrases may be used as circumstances warrant). The username and password for the affected MMSI account may be changed at the discretion of the Service Agent, working with the offended party.

NOTE: USCG MISLE Name field is limited to 50 characters. FCC Name field is limited to 35 characters.

Recommendation 4: Service Agents shall add the police report number and identity of local law enforcement to the Remarks field of the MMSI record.

Recommendation 5: Anyone with a DSC-equipped radio can transmit a position report request to the offended MMSI in order to locate the stolen device(s). Local law enforcement personnel may then investigate and detain suspects found in possession of said equipment.

Recommendation 6: Closure of the case shall be handled jointly by the service agent, the victim and local law enforcement.