**MMSI Frequently Asked Questions**

1. Why can’t MMSIs be handled like EPIRB identities, encoded into the radio or AIS by manufacturers and registered by a third party?  
   * MMSIs used by ships are required internationally to be assigned and registered under the ship’s individual radio station license. Since every country has long been required to administer radio station licenses anyway, the costs of establishing and administering a new database for MMSIs can thus be avoided.
   * In 1996, the FCC permitted users on ships not required to carry radios, such as recreational boaters, to operate maritime radios without an individual radio station license, but to instead be “licensed by rule”. License-by-rule MMSI providers were established as an alternative to the requirement that MMSIs be issued under the ship’s individual radio station license. License-by-rule assignments are unique to the United States.
2. I am just a casual sailor and I want to get a handheld radio for emergencies. I do not own a boat, but I would like to be able to use DSC-enabled radio to help the Coast Guard get to me quicker on the boats that I rent, if ever there was a problem.

MMSIs for VHF handhelds not intended for dedicated use on any particular boat, and not intended for commercial ships, can be obtained from [Shine Micro](https://store.shinemicro.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=SMI&Product_Code=NUM-MMSI-002). Make sure you select VHF Handheld MMSIs before purchasing. See also the [*MMSIs for VHF Handhelds*](https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/MMSIs-for-VHF-Handhelds) webpage.

1. I just bought a boat and updated its MMSI registration. Why does the AIS data display the old boat name?  
     
   Boat name and related information broadcast by AIS is programmed into the AIS radio. The AIS radio itself must be reprogrammed when used on a different boat. Boat information included in the MMSI registration is part of the MMSI database and is not broadcast. Registration information is available to Coast Guard for use in a distress.
2. How do I register my AIS?

See the Coast Guard’s AIS FAQ [How do I register, encode, install, verify my AIS or, obtain or update an MMSI?](https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/ais-frequently-asked-questions#2)

1. Why is it so difficult to reset own-ship MMSI?

﻿International agreements specify that once stored, it should only be possible for an authorized user to change the MMSI with cooperation from the manufacturer.