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| From: VTS31 | e-NAV9/10/2  Formerly e-NAV8/10/3 |
| To: e-NAV8 | 21 September 2010 |

Liaison Note

**Availability of VHF frequencies**

# Introduction

The Secretariat was asked to bring to the attention of the Committee an issue involving the availability of VHF frequencies. WG4 requested further information, which has now been provided by the Chairman of the VTS Committees WG1 - Operations

# Earlier references

e-NAV3/7/8 (formerly VTS26-output-1 Liaison note to e-NAV on VHF Frequencies.

e-NAV7/10/19 (formerly VTS30-output-11) Liaison note to e-NAV on Future use of the VHF Radio Spectrum in the Port Environment.

*Note by Secretariat. The original VTS output papers are provided along with this liaison note.*

# Additional information

As an update, a few additional points are:

1. It is understood that a proposal will be going to WRC to re-designate some duplex circuits to simplex (this proposal combined with a proposal for other duplex to be reassigned to data). Whilst this is a step in the right direction and may form a short term strategy, it is really a very modest proposal. It may, however, eventually help to free up some more channels for VTS use and could help in the future development of a transition plan if a more radical change is agreed at a later date.
2. The Port of London Authority has conducted a short snapshot trial in London inviting vessels to use channel 87. This should have provided a simplex option using the designated lower leg of a previous duplex channel, of which the higher leg was reallocated to AIS 1 (the same applies to Chs 88 and AIS 2). Although this reallocation was agreed by WRC and ITU in about 1997, it is disappointing to note that in the snapshot trial of about two weeks, more than 60% had their equipment still set to the old duplex channels. The lesson for any further reallocation of duplex to simplex circuits (as in the first bullet above) is that this must have a target date identified or it will be another 13 years or more before advantage can be taken of any change agreed.
3. From a personal perspective, it appears that there is a lack of common policy between WRC and IMO and the technical and operational representatives insufficiently briefed on the others' interests. National members need to ensure that a common policy is taken forward in both arenas. There seems to be a lack of support from the "operational" side that there is a problem.
4. Since the VTS 26 note was written, the UK has been deeply engaged in proposals to charge for the use of spectrum by both the maritime and aviation sectors - a concept known as Administrative Incentive Pricing or AIP. Charges on maritime simplex circuits are being proposed in the UK based simply on the assessment by the UK regulator, Ofcom, that the eight simplex channels specifically allocated to ship shore use (i.e. VTS) are "congested".
5. AIP has highlighted that the aviation sector has already divided a number of 25 KHz channels into 8 1/3 KHz channels, yet in the maritime sector we are still rather limply looking at the division of maritime channels into 12.5 KHz spacings. Industrial advice is that 6.25 KHz spacings are entirely feasible given today's technology and, that if digital trunked networks are considered, then the utilisation of the available spectrum would be enhanced by several multiples. Such work could free up spectrum for use by e-Nav applications and there may even be spare capacity to give away to non-maritime use in the longer term - a proposition that should be catching the imagination.
6. There seems to be a total lethargy to do anything aboutthis on the basis that 3rd world states will object and in any case it will take forever. The response to that is that, with a suitable transition plan, analogue and digital technologies can co-exist until such time as everyone is ready to move to new technologies and, secondly, this technology will eventually be adopted so the process must start at sometime, so why not now?
7. As a final note, it has also just been identified that some ports are using duplex channels in the "talk-through" mode by rebroadcasting the ship to shore leg and effectively turning it into a simplex circuit as a means of finding channels that are interference free. I am actively looking at how we might achieve this here in London. It is, of course, hugely inefficient on spectrum use as it takes up 50 KHz when 25 KHz would do but it does offer a further option for any transition plan and, more importantly, it offers an immediate fix for today's problems that is within a port's capability to implement with no change required to any ship fit.

# Further information

The Chairman of VTS WG1, Barry Goldman, is happy to be contacted for further information.

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# Action requested

The e-NAV Committee is requested to review the input paper and advise the VTS Committee of the results.