



THE NATIONAL COMMODORE OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

James E. Vass, Jr.

P. O. Box 269
Port O'Connor, TX 77982-0269
Tel: 361-983-2469 Cell: 361-550-4084
Email: jvass@tisd.net



20 May 2011

Fellow Auxiliaries:

The Coast Guard has asked the Auxiliary to help with a “major ‘safety of life’ issue” affecting recreational boating, and we need your help.

Here's the problem. Many boaters bought Digital Selective Calling (DSC) radios thinking they could just push the red “Distress” button on the front to call for help in an emergency.

However, most boaters with DSC radios haven't connected them to their GPS and haven't registered the radios to get a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number. The emergency “Distress” call won't work correctly if that hasn't been done.

Although the great technology of these radios can take the search out of search and rescue, it does boaters little good if it's not been implemented correctly. We need you to help reach out to the boating public and ask them to Get Connected for Rescue.

For recreational boaters, there are three important steps to follow.

1. Register the radio to obtain an MMSI number. (It's free and can be done online.)
2. Enter that number into the radio. (The DSC radio distress alert features will not work without the MMSI number programmed into the radio.)
3. Connect the DSC radio to the GPS. (They may need the help of a qualified technician.)

If boaters take those three steps, help will come quickly when they push the red “Distress” button. If they don't take those three steps, it's likely that help will be delayed.

Here's what we can do:

Vessel Examiners and Surface Operations Crews - When performing a VSC, or when you interact with boaters on the water, ask the boat owner if they have a DSC radio. If they don't yet, suggest that they consider one. If they do have a DSC radio, ask them if they have an MMSI number and if the radio is connected to the GPS. If the answer to either of those is “no”, please explain why it would be in their best interests to complete those steps. Remind them that it could save their life.

1



Dependability



Integrity



Diversity

Public Education Instructors – When conducting PE classes, please take a moment to explain the importance of connecting the DSC radio to the GPS and of obtaining an MMSI number.

In the coming days, we will post additional information on DSC radios and the GMDSS (the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System - the worldwide system that makes it easier to rescue distressed ships, boats and aircraft) on our website. We will also post links to technical information that may be of help to boaters who want to connect their radios GPS units. We encourage you to learn more about the GMDSS, DSC radios and the many features they have. Thank you for helping boaters Get Connected for Rescue.

Bob Shafer, DIR-R
Tom Nunes, DIR-A
Lillian Haines, DIR-V
Dave Maul, DIR-E
The Auxiliary GMDSS Action Team

Very respectfully,



James E. Vass, Jr.
National Commodore