

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

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Re: WT-Docket No. 21-230
August 3, 2021

Mr. Charles Cooper
Associate Administrator
Office of Spectrum Management
National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Cooper,

Upon review of the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC's) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) WT Docket No. 21-230, regarding Part 80 of the Commission's Rules and *The Use of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) for Devices that Can Be Used to Mark Fishing Equipment (FCC 21-69)*, the United States Coast Guard (Coast Guard) would like to pass on the following comments and concerns.

The Coast Guard is the principal Federal agency responsible for maritime mobility, safety, security, and environmental stewardship of U.S. ports and waters, along more than 95,000 miles of U.S. coastline, 25,000 miles of U.S. navigable rivers, and 4.5 million square miles of U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and of U.S. vessels on the high seas. As such, it is the position of the Coast Guard, as recommended by the International Maritime Organization Resolution¹, that the FCC not take any action regarding fish equipment markers or any other AIS device that may infringe the integrity of the radio channels allocated for AIS, including licensing or permitting the use of devices that do not meet or are not type-certified to the appropriate requirements of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Recommendation ITU-R M.1371².

The use of AIS for fish equipment (net) markers, and other novel purposes was a matter of robust discussion at international fora involved in AIS, and most importantly at the World Radio Conference in 2019 (WRC-19), which included members of the United States delegation (US del) from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the United States Coast Guard (USCG). At that time, the US del, led by the FCC, joined a conference consensus to adopt a recommendation that these markers and similar autonomous marine radio devices (AMRD) operate at 160.900 MHz (Ch. 2006). Recommendation ITU-R M.2135, published in preparation for WRC-19, defined AMRDs into two groups: Group A, those that enhanced safety of navigation, such as AIS mobile aids to navigation and DSC man overboard devices; and Group B, those not used for safety of navigation, but for other maritime purposes, such as identifying fish nets. It also defined their operating characteristics: a power limit of 100 mW and an antenna height no greater than 1 meter above the water and are allowed to broadcast using ITU-R 1371 AIS protocols, but not on

¹ See [IMO Resolution MSC.347\(91\), Recommendation for the Protection of the AIS VHF Data Link \(VDL\)](#).

² See <https://www.itu.int/rec/R-REC-M.1371/en>.

AIS channels. Thus, we urge the FCC to remain consistent with this international consensus approach regarding marking fishing equipment with AMRD Group B devices operating on Ch. 2006. Because they will be operated at low power and predominately on the high seas, they are unlikely to cause interference to users (such as railroads) operating on adjacent channels on land.

Regarding the potential for using an AMRD B or similar device on AIS channels, the Coast Guard notes that there is only one existing AIS message (variant) that addresses fish nets, IMO's Area Notice Application Specific Message (FI=22/23, Description Code 16 = Caution Area: Fishery – nets in water). However, such use is limited to stations identified as a base station, AIS aid to navigation, or a vessel; and does not include devices fitted to fish equipment (which, under the current standard, lack a recognized identity). Further, because these devices are most likely to be used outside U.S. waters, and to ensure global interoperability amongst existing AIS devices, the Coast Guard urges the FCC to defer to international bodies such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Associations of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), and International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), to ensure said devices are addressed within their pertinent AIS guidelines, recommendations, resolutions, and standards³, prior to formulating any regulations. Before they can be permitted to operate on an AIS channel, it is critical that said devices be assigned a unique globally recognized identity (i.e., MMSI or Source ID) and be designed to transmit that identifier so they can be easily identified and uniquely portrayed⁴ amongst other existing AIS users. The Coast Guard is willing to assist and partner with the FCC in this outreach and development.

Finally, Coast Guard requests that the licensing, and operating characteristics of any devices the FCC intends to allow on AIS channels be coordinated in advance through the Interdepartment Radio Advisory Committee and that their certification be coordinated with the Coast Guard, in the same manner as for existing FCC-certified AIS devices.

Sincerely,

Jerry L. Ulcek
Spectrum Management and Telecommunications
Division Chief
U. S. Coast Guard

³ See <https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=AISReferences>.

⁴ The portrayal of AIS devices is currently defined by [IMO Safety of Navigation Circular 243/Rev.2\(Corr\)](#), *Amended Guidelines For The Presentation Of Navigational-Related Symbols, Terms And Abbreviations* and conformance to IEC 62288 test standards.