

FHH Telecom Law
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Changes to Maritime Regulations

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A recent pair of FCC orders has changed almost every facet of maritime communications, and seeks comment on numerous other proposals.

Among other changes, the FCC converted the licensing structure for Automated Maritime Telecommunications Systems to a market based system, allowing a single applicant to acquire both allocated spectrum blocks. In addition, the FCC extended the fishing-vessel exemption from the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS), although it did not make the exemption more widely available to other vessels. The FCC also created a restricted GMDSS operator's license and allowed the Coast Guard to issue certificates for Proof of Passing. Although the FCC found that Morse code is used rarely, "if at all," it nonetheless refused to eliminate certain restrictions that benefit users of Morse code frequencies.

In view of the complexity of these orders, we encourage readers interested in specific issues to contact us for further information.