UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

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SHIP SECURITY ALERT SYSTEM (SSAS)
Is your system ready?

The U.S. Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that owners, operators and/or others involved with the technical examination and testing of a Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) fully understand the critical nature and importance of this system. A SSAS must be serviced and maintained in order to be fully operational in the event of an emergency.

Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), Chapter XI-2/6 mandates the carriage of shipboard equipment for sending covert alerts indicating the security of the ship in under threat or has been compromised (such as piracy, terrorism or armed robbery). SOLAS requires that the SSAS is capable of being activated from the navigation bridge and in at least one other location. The SSAS should conform to performance standards equivalent to those adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

An investigation into a recent Breach of Security (BOS) onboard a vessel operating overseas revealed that the system did not function properly. It was discovered that the primary activation button failed to send the BOS message and that when the secondary location activation button was depressed, not all critical data was transmitted. Under other circumstances, this type of failure could have been disastrous and resulted in significant harm to the crew.

Although the SSAS was serviced two days prior to the incident as a part of the annual Safety Radio Survey, records indicate that the technician did not have the proper testing equipment for the system on board and only an internal operational self-test was carried out and accepted. A complete SSAS survey with an external test would have indentified the system faults which then could have been corrected prior to the incident.

The SSAS survey should always be performed by a fully qualified technician who has adequate knowledge of the International Ship & Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code pertaining to SSAS, the SOLAS Convention and the IMO standards for SSAS. A technician's survey should involve checks for:

a) compliance with IMO performance standards,
b) a minimum of two activation points are provided,
c) transmission of the security alert is possible without an adjustment of the radio system,
d) transmission initiated by the SSAS activation points include a unique/identifier,
e) transmission includes the ship identity and current position associated with a date and time,
f) when activated, SSAS continues the alert until deactivated and/or reset,
g) SSAS is capable of being tested, and
h) SSAS power source is powered from the ship's main source of power and is also capable of operation from an alternate source of power.

The U.S. Coast Guard **strongly recommends** that owners and operators ensure that the SSAS survey completed on board involves the checks listed above and that if deficiencies are identified, they be corrected immediately.

This Safety Alert is provided for informational purposes only and does not relieve any mandates of domestic or international safety, operational or material regulations or standards. Developed by the Office of Vessel Activities (CG-543), Distributed by the Office of Investigations and Analysis (CG-545), United States Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC. Questions may be addressed to LCDR James Fogle at James.T.Fogle@uscg.mil.

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