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## MR'S ADVISORY TO SHIPPING No. A-09-2003

**April 21, 2003**

**TO :** All Steamship Agents, Owners, and Operators

**SUBJECT:** Reminder on the Implementation of AIS in the Panama Canal

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1. As was published in Advisory to Shipping No. A-05-2003, the Panama Canal Authority will implement mandatory carriage of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) in Panama Canal waters on July 1, 2003. Therefore, to be accepted for transit through the Panama Canal, all vessels over 300 gross tons or over 20 meters LOA must be equipped with an AIS transponder that meets the standards set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). With regards to combined and multiple units (tug-and-tows), only the Tug will be required to be equipped with an AIS transponder. As a temporary measure and as a means to assist those vessels that arrive for transit without functional AIS systems between July 1, 2003 and the final implementation date required by the IMO of December 2004, the Panama Canal will have AIS ready vessel tracking portable units available for rent at a nominal rental fee of U.S. \$150.00 per transit.

2. Additionally, we provide the following responses to some of the questions we have received from customers:

*a. Are yachts included in the requirements to carry AIS systems to transit the Panama Canal?*

Yes, some yachts. As established in the published requirements, any vessel, to include yachts, that are over 300 gross tons or have a LOA of 20 meters or more, will be required to carry their own permanently installed and functional AIS system or rent an AIS ready vessel tracking portable unit from the Panama Canal Authority.

*b. Is the nominal rental fee of U.S. \$150.00 a charge for daily use or is it a comprehensive charge for a complete transit of the Panama Canal?*

The nominal rental fee of U.S. \$150.00 covers the complete transit and includes delivery to and removal of units from vessels. This rental service will not be available beyond December 31, 2004.

*c. As per Regulation 19, Chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS 74), no Tanker and Passengers vessels will be required to carry onboard AIS systems effective on the date of the first safety equipment survey between July 1, 2004 and December 31, 2004. For these vessels, is it a*

*Panama Canal Authority requirement to install AIS on board starting from 1st July 2003?*

The amendments to Regulation 19 of the SOLAS convention replaced the existing subparagraphs .4, .5 and .6 of paragraph 2.4.2 with a new subparagraph .4 that requires all vessels, other than passenger ships and tankers, of 300 gross tonnage and upwards but less than 50,000 gross tonnage, to have AIS installed not later than their first safety equipment survey conducted between the dates of July 1 and December 31, 2004. Subparagraphs .1, .2, and .3 of paragraph 2.4.2 of this same regulation remain in effect. Passenger ships and Tankers are covered by subparagraphs .1 and .2 respectively. However, the Panama Canal recognizes that not all vessels will have their permanent AIS systems installed until December 31, 2004, therefore you will have the choice of a rental AIS ready vessel tracking portable unit from the ACP.

*d. Some older ships only have 100VAC to 110VAC electrical service available on the bridge, instead of the required 120VAC. Will this be acceptable?*

Yes. An exception will be made for older ships and this lower voltage will be acceptable.

*e. Some older ships only have a 2-prong USA standard electrical outlet, instead of the required 3-prong outlet. Will this be acceptable?*

Yes. An exception will be made for older ships and this type of outlet (NEMA 1-15R) will be acceptable.

*f. Will 220-240VAC electrical service be acceptable?*

No.

*g. What will happen if a ship has AIS but it is not working properly, or it is not programmed properly?*

A rental AIS ready vessel tracking portable unit will be used for the transit and charged to the vessel.

3. As an additional reminder, following are the requirements for the installation of the shipboard AIS transponders:

a. The AIS system installed onboard ships shall be Class "A" AIS shipborne equipment according to IMO MSC 74 (69) Annex 3, "*Recommendation on Performance Standards for a Universal Shipborne Automatic Identification Systems (AIS)*", as amended.

b. The AIS equipment shall be type-approved according to standard IEC 61993-2. The Panama Canal Authority may require presentation of the type approval document. Some transponders have old firmware versions, which will not function properly. The make and model of these units however, may be the same as those of the newer type-approved version. Normally this condition can be corrected by

installation of a newer firmware version in the AIS equipment and obtaining the type approval papers.

c. The AIS equipment shall be installed according to IMO "*Guidelines for Installation of Shipborne Automatic Identification System (AIS)*", including the installation of a Pilot Plug. The Pilot Plug shall be close to conning position No. 1 in the navigation bridge. This plug shall be labeled "AIS PILOT PLUG" and shall have nearby a USA standard (NEMA 5-15R) 120V, AC, 3-prong power receptacle, to provide power to the pilot's laptop computer. This receptacle shall be connected to emergency power.

4. The Panama Canal Authority has been observing the signals sent by ships already fitted with AIS. Some of these signals reveal deficiencies, which would make them unusable for transiting the Panama Canal. The most common deficiencies found so far are as follows:

a. Ship's static data is loaded incorrectly or not present at all. As an example, we have seen ships reporting dimensions that are obviously incorrect.

b. Some ships are not transmitting heading information. The connection of the ship's gyro compass to the AIS is required.

c. On some ships, although the AIS system seems to be connected to the gyro compass, the heading information we are receiving shows the vessel with a different heading than the actual heading of the vessel.

d. Some shipborne equipment does not respond to shore station commands, especially AIS Message 16, which is the "Assigned Mode" command. The cause is probably outdated firmware.

Should you have any other specific inquiries about AIS requirements, please do not hesitate to contact us at [mr@pancanal.com](mailto:mr@pancanal.com).

ORIGINAL SIGNED

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