

July 17, 2003

**MR'S ADVISORY TO SHIPPING No. A-22-2003**

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

**SUBJECT: Reminder on AIS requirements for the Panama Canal**

1. The Panama Canal Authority implemented 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 system that meets the standards set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). With regard to combined and multiple units (tug-and-tows), only the Tug will be required to be equipped with an AIS system. As a temporary measure and as a means to assist those vessels that arrive for transit without functional AIS systems before December 31 2004, the Panama Canal Authority will have AIS-ready vessel tracking pilot portable units available for rent at USD 150.00 per transit.
2. As a reminder, shipboard AIS transponders shall comply with the following requirements:
  - a. The AIS installed onboard ships shall be Class A.
  - 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.
  - 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 on 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. The IMO "*Guidelines for Installation of Shipborne Automatic Identification System (AIS)*" are available on the web page of the International Maritime Organization at the following address: [http://www.imo.org/includes/blastData.asp/doc\\_id=2741/227.pdf](http://www.imo.org/includes/blastData.asp/doc_id=2741/227.pdf)
3. Some of the AIS stations installed on ships arriving to the Panama Canal do not function correctly. So far the most common deficiencies are:
  - a. Ship's static data is loaded incorrectly or not present at all. For example, some ships report dimensions that are obviously incorrect.
  - b. Some ships are not transmitting heading information. The connection of the ship's gyro to the AIS is required.
  - c. Some shipborne AIS stations do not respond to shore station commands, especially AIS Message 16, which is the "Assigned Mode" command, and AIS Message 17, which is "DGNSS broadcast binary message". The cause is probably outdated firmware. All AIS shipborne units shall use Message 17 data when received to correct the internal GPS position and use it to broadcast its position.
  - d. Incorrect location of the Pilot Plug on the bridge and/or the installation not following IMO's "*Guidelines for Installation of Shipborne Automatic Identification System (AIS)*".

**ORIGINAL SIGNED**

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