



Technical Circular

No.: 009/2023

Date: 15th May 2023

Subject: VHF Marine Radios with Digital Selective Calling (DSC) Capability – Automatic Channel Switching.

1. VHF marine radios with DSC capability have a function that enables automatic channel switching to VHF channel 16, when a DSC distress alert is received. This design function complies with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Recommendation ITU-R M.493-15 (2019).
2. **This automatic channel switching feature in VHF DSC radios may impact voice communications during safety critical operations.**
3. In this regard, it is to be noted that the above stated automatic channel switching function can be disabled by the user to prevent automatic channel switching. When disabled, transceivers will continue to detect DSC distress alerts. The user can then decide whether to accept the channel switch request.
4. Manufacturers implement above feature (disabling of automatic channel switching function) in different ways and usually include instructions in the user manual. If the user manual or documentation is not clear in this regard, advice from the supplier or service agent should be sought.
5. Owners, managers and masters of vessels fitted with VHF marine radios with DSC capability are advised to be aware of the implications of the automatic channel switching feature in VHF DSC radios and ensure that ships' bridge procedures include instructions on how and when to disable and re-enable automatic channel switching during safety critical operations.

Encl.:

1. AMSA Marine Notice No. 02 of 2023.



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Marine notice 02-2023
Supersedes 10-2017

VHF marine radios with digital selective calling capability— automatic channel switching

Purpose

This marine notice provides information on how the automatic channel switching feature in VHF digital selective calling (DSC) radios may impact voice communications during safety critical operations.

Users should be aware of the implications of the automatic channel switching feature in VHF DSC radios being enabled during safety critical operations. Instructions on its use should be included in the ship's bridge procedures.

Ships' bridge procedures should include instructions on how and when to disable and re-enable automatic channel switching during safety critical operations.

Management of the automatic channel switching feature

VHF marine radios with DSC capability have a function that enables automatic channel switching to VHF channel 16, when a DSC distress alert is received.

This design function complies with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Recommendation ITU-R M.493-15 (2019).

Users should be aware that the automatic channel switching function can be disabled to prevent automatic channel switching.

If automatic channel switching is disabled, transceivers will continue to detect DSC distress alerts. The user can then decide whether to accept the channel switch request.

Manufacturers implement the feature in different ways and usually include instructions in the user manual.

Equipment should provide a visual indication when the automatic switching function is disabled. If the user manual or documentation is not clear in this regard, advice from the supplier or service agent should be sought.