

Global Maritime Distress and Safety System GMDSS Stats and Facts

FACTS

POTENTIAL HAZARDS OF GMDSS

1. False alarms or unintentional activations of distress beacons (such as EPIRBs) can occur. These false alarms can divert resources and cause unnecessary risks for search and rescue teams.
2. Radio communication systems used in the GMDSS, such as VHF, MF/HF, and satellite communication, can be susceptible to interference by atmospheric conditions, electromagnetic interference, or physical obstacles, leading to poor signal quality or disrupted communications.
3. Equipment failures, such as radio malfunctions or satellite system outages, can occur. If onboard equipment fails, it can impede the ship's ability to communicate distress signals or receive assistance promptly.
4. Lack of training or human error can lead to improper use of the GMDSS and potentially compromise safety.
5. Disruption of GMDSS infrastructures, such as power outages or satellite failures, can hinder the system's effectiveness and delay the response to distress situations.
6. While the GMDSS aims to provide global coverage, there may be areas with limited or no communication coverage, especially in remote or polar regions.

STATS

- It is estimated that with the introduction of GMDSS the safety of life at sea was improved by more than 85%.
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- According to recent IMO statistics, 80% of accidents occurring at sea are caused by human errors, with half due to poor communication.
- Over 1,500 people lost their lives when radio calls for help to ships in the vicinity went unanswered.
- Analysis of the resulting casualty reports determined that radio communications are a prevalent causal factor in marine casualties, being a factor in 18 % of critical vessel casualties, 28 % of critical personnel injuries, and contributing to 19 % of critical marine casualties overall.
- Poor radio communication has been a main contributing factor in numerous maritime casualties, varying from groundings and collisions to entire ship losses and even worse, fatalities. There were 3 accidents in the years 2018 and 2019.