

## NATIONAL GMDSS MEETING

MAY 19, 2016

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA

Of the 5000 registered members of the GMDSS about 30 attended this meeting, the vast majority of whom were professional representatives of the Coast Guard, FCC and other technical organizations. The United States Power Squadrons and Boat US were represented as well as the National Boating Federation. The meeting, which was completed in three hours, made no major decisions on anything listed in the agenda and for the most part made no significant changes to the summary record of the January 14th meeting.

A large proportion of the meeting time consisted of a lot of discussion, but no conclusions, about the MMSI problems. Most of it had to do with confusing inaccurate registration of the VHF marine radios capable of DSC operation. It seems that a lot of confusion is aggravated when a boat and its radio equipment are sold from one person to another.

The only major item regarding recreational vessel groups had to do with a pending new Coast Guard mobile phone app for boating safety which would enable boaters to identify the location of virtual and synthetic markers (now only available on AIS equipped vessels). There is an attempt to include position information on 911 telephone calls. They are considering allowing DSC equipped boats to not be required to carry flares any more. EPERBS were discussed with the realization that the process of replacing batteries is so expensive and time consuming that users should consider discarding and buying new ones. E-Loran was brought up indicating a discouraging future, but nothing definitive.

In the E-navigation discussion, it was noted that any possible replacement of paper charts with electronic charts is a long way off. I was able to briefly express our concern for an increasing dependence on electronic navigation and the possible substitution of electronic aids for physical aids to navigation. Our two concerns are the inevitable distractions caused by a reliance solely on GPS and other electronic information sources which prevent heads up operation of vessels and the fact that very few recreational vessels, of which there are over 900,000 registered in Florida, have the necessary electronic equipment or are likely to have it in the near future. I was quickly put down by a professional who held up a cell phone and said "What about these?"

Bill Allbright  
for Earl Waesche, NBF Legislative Director