



NEWS from the **Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services (RTCM)**

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The Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services (RTCM) Publishes Standard on VHF-FM Digital Small Message Services (VDSMS)

Summary: RTCM Special Committee 123 (SC123) has completed a new standard on “VHF-FM Digital Small Message Services (VDSMS)”. Designated as RTCM Standard 12301.1, it describes a method for transmitting short data messages over maritime VHF radio voice channels without disturbing voice communications. RTCM has petitioned the U.S. Federal Communications Commission to authorize VDSMS on selected maritime VHF channels. The standard is available from RTCM at its secure online publication store. Visit www.rtcn.org and click on “Publications.”

RTCM Standard 12301.1 is a new 4-page standard which specifies the minimum functional and technical requirements for VHF-FM Digital Small Message Services (VDSMS). VDSMS are designed to be embodied within an item of equipment capable of receiving and transmitting VHF radio communication. This is not an equipment standard. VDSMS are intended to provide for short messaging from ship-to-ship, shore-to-ship and ship-to-shore.

VDSMS are intended to operate on frequencies in the international VHF Marine Band defined in Appendix 18 of the International Radio Regulations (RR Ap 18), unless otherwise restricted by regulation. VDSMS may share channels with other services (e.g. voice services) on a non-interference basis. The VHF Data Link (VDL) access method for VDSMS is intended to ensure that a call in progress is not disrupted. VDSMS transmissions have a limited duration and a limited duty cycle to ensure the availability of the channel for other users. VDSMS transmitter emissions masking is intended to protect users of the adjacent channels.

The body of the standard includes general requirements for VDSMS. Requirements for specific technology implementations will be contained in future separate Annexes that will include packet data structure, message types, error detection/correction and other technical details associated with each technology.

RTCM has petitioned the U.S. Federal Communications Commission to authorize VDSMS on VHF-FM maritime channels, with the exception of those channels where existing regulations would restrict its use.

About RTCM:

The Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services (RTCM) is a non-profit organization whose objectives include studying and preparing reports on maritime electronic navigation and telecommunications practices. Our focus is on needs and technologies with a view toward improving efficiency and capabilities of maritime electronic navigation and telecommunications services, suggesting ways to keep rules and regulations to the minimum essential for effectiveness, and making recommendations on important issues. Established by the U.S. government in 1947 to support technical decision-making in the area of maritime radiocommunications, RTCM is now a membership organization that supports and encourages needed improvements in maritime communications and electronic navigation. RTCM technical standards have been widely incorporated in the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Part 80 rules, they have served as international standards, and they have been used as the basis for international technical standards used in the maritime services.