

## **DECLARATION OF SEA AREA A1**

In accordance with Chapter IV, Regulation 2 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS), and IMO Resolution A. 801(19), Appendix 3, Sea Area A1 means an area within the radiotelephone coverage of at least one VHF Coast Station in which continuous Digital Selective Calling (DSC) alerting is available, as may be defined by a Contracting Government, and provides that stations participating in VHF DSC watchkeeping in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) should provide as complete a coverage of this immediate Sea Area as possible.

Based upon the foregoing provisions and the performance of the USCG Rescue 21 System, the U.S. will declare Sea Area A1 by publishing a Notice in the *Federal Register*. Sea Area A1 will be defined by the U.S. as that area within 20 nautical miles seaward of the territorial baseline along the East, West, and Gulf coasts of the United States, excluding Alaska, and including Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the Northern Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. This Declaration is based on the fact that the Rescue 21 System provides Coast Stations so that nearly continuous DSC alerting (in excess of 90 percent overall) is available within 20 nautical miles seaward of the territorial baseline of the U.S., excluding Alaska, and including Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the Northern Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

In its Notice, the USCG will remind mariners that no radiocommunications system can guaranty 100 percent coverage or 100 percent availability because of the vagaries of radio propagation and equipment performance. The Coast Guard will urge all mariners to be sure that they have obtained and are using a proper Mobile Maritime Service Identity (MMSI), and that their DSC radios are connected to Global Positioning System (GPS) devices (if the DSC radio does not have built-in GPS). Assuring that the DSC alert is accompanied by both a properly registered MMSI and a GPS location enhances and expedites search and rescue efforts, especially when a nearby vessel receives a distress call.

The Coast Guard will also take the opportunity in its Notice to indicate that, while not related to Sea Area A1, the Rescue 21 System provides Coast Stations along the Great Lakes so that nearly continuous DSC alerting is also available within 20 nautical miles offshore from most U.S. locations along the Great Lakes.

It is anticipated that the Sea Area A1 Declaration will be published in the *Federal Register* sometime within the next six months. While the operational programs have concurred with the Declaration and necessary clearances have been received, the USCG Legislative Affairs and Public Affairs Divisions require some time to review and prepare for the Declaration, and the Declaration must be cleared through the DHS and *Federal Register* processes before it can be published.