

## **MARINE RADIO STANDARDS**

### **International maritime radio standards**

The principal driver for the creation of new marine radio standards is the International Maritime Organization (IMO) – in effect, the maritime arm of the United Nations.

The IMO set broad, high level operational parameters for marine radio equipment performance. They then task the International Telecommunications Union (ITU – the telecoms arm of the UN) with creation of technical specifications.

The ITU undertake this task through their ‘Study Groups’ – volunteer committees of marine radio specialists, normally drawn from Government agencies. The ITU study groups produce what are known as the ITU-R M series of recommendations. These documents define specific operational and technical requirements for marine radio equipment and systems.

The DSC technical and operational specifications, for example, are ITU-R M series recommendations (ITU-R M.493-11 and ITU-R M.451-9). However, the M series of recommendations cannot actually be used as standards, as they do not include test methods, some of the more detailed technical requirements and climatic and durability specifications.

The task for creation of actual international marine standards to be used as the basis for approval of equipment falls to the International Electro-technical Commission (IEC). The IEC is a European body whose remit is to prepare and publish international standards for all electrical, electronic and related technologies. These serve as a basis for national standardisation and as references when drafting international tenders and contracts.

The IEC and ITU standards have no force of law, per se. To be used, they must be called up in national legislation. Many national standards (particularly in Australia and the US) either reference the corresponding IEC standard in its entirety, or reference a version modified for local requirements.

### **Australian marine radio standards**

In Australia, regulation of the radio spectrum is undertaken by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

Radio equipment sold in Australia is covered by either a class licence (applicable to a general type/group of equipment – generally low power devices such as EPIRBs) or an apparatus licence (for individual types of equipment).

### **The Australian standards creation process**

ACMA have delegated the creation of radio standards to Standards Australia. Standards Australia develops standards through a committee process – with the committee members being drawn from industry and Government.

Committee RC/4 is responsible for creation of marine radio standards, including those for EPIRBs and MSLD. As with international standards, the Australian Standards produced by RC/4 do not have the force of law until they are called up in legislation.

ACMA class licences are used as the legislative vehicle for call up of the relevant Australian Standards.