



BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHING VESSEL CIRCULAR



FVC-13/06

Issued: 14th March 2013

Rev: 1

TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, CHARTERERS, MASTER AND CREW, DEPUTY REGISTRARS AND RESIDENT AGENTS

SUBJECT: MOBILE TRANSCIEVER UNIT REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITES OF VESSEL OPERATORS

Reference: Issued in accordance with Part II 3 (1)(f) and Part VII 19(1)(2) of the Belize High Seas Fishing Act, 2003

BACKGROUND:

Vessel monitoring systems (VMS) are used in commercial fishing to allow environmental and fisheries regulatory organizations to monitor, the position, time at a position, and course and speed of fishing vessels. They are a key part of monitoring control and surveillance (MCS) programs at national and international levels.

Tuna and other fisheries management measures include a number of area specific regulations where certain fishing operations are restricted or prohibited in order to protect the habitat and spawning aggregations of these species, or to reduce fishing pressure in areas that are heavily fished. VMS allows us to monitor compliance with these and other regulations and to track the vessel activities as well as assist in deterring any IUU activities.

APPLICABILITY

This Circular is applicable to all Belize registered fishing vessels operating on the high seas.

REQUIREMENT OF A MOBILE TRANSCIEVER UNIT ON BOARD BELIZE FLAGGD VESSELS

1. All Belize flagged fishing vessels are required to have on board a mobile transceiver unit (MTU) aka a vessel monitoring system.
2. No vessel will be allowed to leave port or carry out fishing activities until an operational MTU has been installed on board the vessel.
3. When a fishing vessel is in port, the MTU should remain functional and shall only be switched off if:
 - a) Prior notification has been given to this Administration.
 - b) Providing that the next position report shows that the vessel has not changed its position in relation to the previous report.

4. In the event of a technical failure or non-functioning of the MTU device fitted on board the vessel, the master or his representative shall, starting from the time that the event was detected or from the time that he was informed, communicate every 4 hours to this Administration, the up to date geographical coordinates of the fishing vessel by appropriate and agreed means of communication.
5. If a technical failure which cannot immediately be rectified occurs while the vessel is on the high seas, the vessel must immediately stow its fishing gears and return to port and report to this Administration that the vessel is being, or has been taken to port with stored gear.
6. Following a technical failure or non-functioning MTU, the vessel may only be allowed to leave port once the MTU is fully functioning to the satisfaction of this Administration. This Administration may authorize a fishing vessel to leave the port with a non-functioning MTU device for its report or replacement.
7. The removal of a MTU device for repair or replacement shall be subject to the approval of this Administration.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A MTU DEVICE

8. The MTU device installed on board a Belize flagged vessel shall ensure the automatic transmission to this Administration at regular intervals of data relating to:
 - a) The fishing vessel identification;
 - b) The most recent geographical position of the fishing vessel, with position report error which shall not be less than 500 meters, with a confidence level of 99%.
 - c) The date and time (expressed in coordinated universal time UTC) of the fixing of the said position of the fishing vessel; and
 - d) The instant speed and course of the fishing vessel.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MASTER/OPERATORS CONCERNING THE MTU

9. The Master/Operator of a Belize flagged vessel shall ensure that the MTU device is operational at all times and that the data referred to above are transmitted.
10. The Master/Operator shall ensure that:
 - a) No person tampers or interferes with the MTU and that the MTU is not altered, damaged, disabled or otherwise interfered with;
 - b) The antenna or the antennas connected to the MTU are not obstructed, disconnected or blocked in any way;
 - c) The MTU is not moved from the required or agreed installed position or removed without the prior written permission of this Administration;
 - d) The power supply of the MTU device is not interrupted in any way; and
 - e) The MTU device is not removed from the fishing vessel
 - f) The MTU is registered in such manner as the Fisheries Administrator may direct or as may be prescribed.

11. It shall be prohibited to destroy, damage, render inoperative or otherwise interfere with the MTU device unless this Administration has authorized its repair or replacement.

ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

This Circular is considered a legally binding document in accordance with Part XIII 108(1)(2) of the Merchant Ships Registration Act 2010. Failure to comply with this circular will result in disciplinary actions taken against the vessel owners, operators and master or any other party affiliated with the operation of the vessel.

IMPLEMENTATION

This Fishing Vessel Circular is to be implemented with immediate effect and shall remain in force until further notification by the Belize Administration.

Any queries related to this Circular should be directed to:

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