



In The Netherlands

# Communication on water

**A radio telephone is a sender and receiver for maritime communication. Via the radio telephone you can make contact with other ships and with stations on shore, such as locks, traffic supervisors or the coast guard. Both at sea and on inland waterways. The good use of a radio telephone contributes to safety on the water.**

## Sail more safely

With some exceptions, pleasure craft are not required to have a radio telephone on board. However, it is advisable to use this equipment on major waterways and on the larger inland waterways. This helps to enhance safety. The organization responsible for 'Varen doe je samen!' strongly recommends the use of a radio telephone. If you have a radio telephone on board, you are required to listen to it. On the inland waterways, including the IJsselmeer and the Wadden Sea, set the radio telephone to channel 10 and, when at sea, to channel 16. It is necessary for everyone to tune into the same channel if captains of vessels want to reach one another and be heard.

## Essential

A radio telephone is a sender-receiver for short distances that operates on VHF (VHF means Very High Frequency). A radio telephone is essential in areas with commercial shipping. Large ships are usually required

to have two radio telephones. A radio telephone is not required on a small vessel, but it is recommended.

## No alternative

A mobile telephone is not an alternative for the radio telephone because, when using a mobile telephone, you have contact with only one organization or person and your reach is limited as is the capacity of the batteries. You may use a walkie-talkie in the Netherlands, but this is not a satisfactory alternative for the radio telephone. A walkie-talkie has less reach than does a radio telephone and its battery capacity is limited. An emergency call via the radio telephone is heard by everyone in the area who is listening. This considerably increases the chance of being helped.



## Why a VHF radio telephone?

### Four important reasons to use the radio telephone:

- By listening to the radio telephone you know what is happening in your surroundings, which ships are in the area and what manoeuvres they are making. Using this information helps you choose a safe course.
- The radio telephone is important for contacting traffic supervisors, bridgemen and lock operators. .
- Your emergency call via the radio telephone is heard by everyone listening in the area around you.
- You receive simple safety messages on board such as weather forecasts, storm warnings and shipping news.

## Traffic supervision

In areas with dangerous curves or junctions and on busily travelled waterways, waterway supervisors direct traffic from traffic posts and central stations. A traffic supervisor gives information and advice as well as instructions about the area under his supervision, this in order to ensure a safe and smooth flow of vessels. If a traffic post or central station calls you, you are required to answer and to provide the requested information. This also holds true for a call on a ship-to-ship channel.

## Block channel

Each traffic post is responsible for a section of a waterway; this is the so-called 'block area'. Each area has its own radio telephone channel, which is indicated on the water maps and on VHF signs along the shore. As soon as you enter a block area and you have a radio telephone on board, you are required to listen to the block channel indicated. When you leave the area, you must switch to channel 10 unless you sail into a new block area. You do not need to report when entering a block area but, if you are going to carry out a special manoeuvre, you must report this.

## Bridges and locks

If you have a radio telephone on board and you are approaching a bridge or a lock, you must listen to the radio telephone channel indicated on the signs. Then you can switch again to channel 10 or to the following block channel.

## Rules for using the radio telephone

Both the Inland Waterways Police Regulations (BPR) and the Rhine Navigation Police Regulations (RPR) contain regulations for maritime communication. The most important of these are:

- The book 'Wetgeving voor de Binnenvaart deel III Marifonie' (Handbook for maritime communication), the proof of registration or license and the operation certificate must be on board.
- If your ship has a radio telephone, you are required to listen to channel 10 (inland waterways), channel 16 (at sea) or the appropriate block channel.
- If you are called on a ship-to-ship channel or a block channel, you are required to give all of the requested information necessary for the safety of shipping.
- In communications, the main language of the country in which the radio telephone is located is used. If there are communication problems, use the language indicated in the shipping police regulation. In countries where this regulation does not exist, use German, French or another suitable language.

## Emergency calls

If a vessel and its passengers find themselves in a serious and threatening situation and need immediate help, the emergency call ('Mayday') may be used. The radio telephone can save lives in an emergency.



## Required registration and operation certificate

In the Netherlands you are required to register maritime radio broadcasting equipment. To do so, you need an operation certificate. You can register via [www.agentschaptelecom.nl](http://www.agentschaptelecom.nl). If you have an unregistered radio telephone or walkie-talkie on board, you are in violation of the rules. Additional equipment such as AIS, EPIRB (emergency beacons) or middle-wave/long-wave SATCOM must also be registered. All of this equipment has the proof of identification issued to the registration holder (ATIS and/or MMSI). Marcom A or B is required to operate some additional equipment. To operate the widely used comb-iradio telephone, you must have at least a Marcom B certificate. You can find more information about the required operation certificates on the website of the Telecom Agency.

## ATIS

The radio telephones and walkie-talkies that are used on (large) inland waterways, such as the IJsselmeer and the Wadden Sea, must broadcast the ATIS code (radio call name) they have been given. ATIS stands for Automatic Transmitter Identification System. Traffic posts, assistance services, bridges and locks can then see who is calling them. And a ship can be identified by its ATIS in case of problems and calamities.

If you purchase a new radio telephone or walkie-talkie, remember to have the given ATIS code programmed. You can find this code on the proof of registration. If you use a radio telephone or walkie-talkie that once belonged to someone else, you must use the ATIS code given to you. If agreed, you may also continue to use the previous owner's code. Any changes in your registration information must be given to Telecom Agency.

## MMSI number

An MMSI number (Maritime Mobile Service Identity) is a unique 9-figure number used to identify a ship. The MMSI number must be programmed in emergency radio beacons (EPIRBs), maritime radio broadcasting equipment for DSC (Digital Selective Calling) and AIS (Automatic Identification System). This helps to make tracing and rescue operations fast and efficient. The MMSI number is similar to the ATIS. In principle, ATIS was used for inland waterways and MMSI for sea-going vessels. With the appearance of AIS, the MMSI number will also be used for inland shipping and recreational vessels. You can request an MMSI number at the Telecom Agency.

## AIS

The Automatic Identification System (AIS) is a globally operating notifying and tracking system that uses transponders. A transponder must be programmed with the name of the vessel, the radio call name and the MMSI number issued. This identification information is automatically broadcast together with the variable data (sort of vessel, position, course, speed) and received by stations on shore and other vessels in the area. The information can be shown on an electric map, which also shows the ship's name. If you want to use the AIS system, you must request an MMSI number at the Telecom Agency.

## Correct programming

The identification codes issued to you (ATIS and MMSI) must be programmed in the related equipment. If AIS is used, the ship's name and radio call name must also be programmed. The correct programming of these code and data can be of major importance and can even save lives during a calamity. The coast guard centre and the traffic supervisors at the traffic stations then know who is calling them.

*In short, correct programming increases your safety!*

## Technical errors

During inspections, technical errors are often found. Examples of these are:

- The identification codes (ATIS, MMSI, AIS) have been incorrectly programmed or are missing.
- The radio telephone has no automatic power reduction. Many channels in the Netherlands may use only 1 Watt (low power) instead of 25 Watts. Using a lower power is important so that communication in the busy and geographically level country of the Netherlands can proceed without disturbances.
- An incorrect aerial configuration, which results in poor broadcasting and reception. This can be caused by moisture in the aerial cable, poor plugs or even a damaged aerial. The aerial, aerial cable and connections should be inspected annually.



## First listen, then broadcast

Always use the radio telephone correctly and according to the prescribed procedures. If necessary, make notes beforehand, practice using the telephone and familiarize yourself with broadcasting language. A radio telephone is for your safety, and correct usage can help to increase this safety.

An important aspect of this correct usage is the way of carrying on conversations that was developed especially for shipping: the conversational procedures. This was developed to make radio messages uniform and to avoid misunderstandings. The 'Wetgeving voor de binnenvaart deel III Marifonie' (Handbook for maritime communication) has instructions on how to use a radio telephone. It also contains the general rules and a list of all of the stations on shore as well as examples of how to carry on a nautical conversation between ships and between ship and shore.

It is advisable to regularly use the radio telephone before and during the sailing season so that you will be familiar with it in an emergency.

## Conversational discipline

Correct conversational discipline is necessary to have clear radio contact without static. You can achieve this by:

- Using the radio telephone channels as they were intended.
- Acting according to the required procedure.
- Discussing only relevant subjects on the channels meant for ship-ship communication, nautical information, communication between a ship and the harbour authorities and communication on board.
- Private conversations should be held only on the VH channels 72 and 77.
- Do not press the broadcast button longer than necessary.



## Supervisors

The following parties are involved in supervising the use of radio telephones.

### Department of Waterways

The Department of Waterways promotes smooth and safe traffic on the network of major waterways for both inland shipping and recreational vessels. Good use of the radio telephone plays an important role in this.

[www.rijkswaterstaat.nl](http://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl)

### Telecom Agency

Telecom supervises communication via the air, and maritime communication is part of this. Telecom endeavours to create clear, safe and professional maritime communication by, among other things, providing information, studying listening facilities and carrying out inspections. +31 (0)50-587 74 44,

[www.agentschaptelecom.nl](http://www.agentschaptelecom.nl)

### Police

In addition to the geographical (regional) police units, the Infrastructure service of the National Unit of Dutch Police is primarily responsible for the safety, investigations and supervision of Dutch waterways and the North Sea. One of its core tasks is to maintain and improve nautical safety. Radio telephone use is part of this. +31 (0) 343 57 8844, [www.politie.nl](http://www.politie.nl)

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Questions? Go to [www.safeboating.eu](http://www.safeboating.eu) and [www.varendoejesamen.nl](http://www.varendoejesamen.nl)

