



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

March 7, 2007

--SMALL ENTITY COMPLIANCE GUIDE--

Dear Permit Holder:

This letter is to inform you that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is announcing a final deadline for all Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) users to update their VMS software to the most current available version. This letter also reminds vessel owners to declare a VMS activity code prior to leaving port for each trip. See below for details of these requirements. A comprehensive VMS instruction packet to further explain the VMS requirements is available at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/fishermen/>.

In addition, VMS users are reminded that, if the vessel owner/operator has been authorized to use the days-at-sea (DAS) call-in system to account for Northeast multispecies DAS, he/she is still required to obtain, and carry on board the vessel, a Gulf of Maine (GOM) Cod Exemption letter, if he/she intends to fish outside of the GOM Regulated Mesh Area and land more than the GOM cod trip limit. This exemption letter may be obtained from the Northeast Regional Permit office by calling 978-281-9370.

VMS SOFTWARE UPDATE FOR SKYMATE USERS

For fishing trips starting on or after **April 1, 2007**, all vessel owner/operators with a VMS unit on board their vessel must declare the correct VMS activity code, using the most current software version available. Boatracs users and Thrane & Thrane users have their software version updated automatically and this reminder, therefore, does not apply to them. However, SkyMate users are required to install new software either via a disk mailed out to each vessel owner or by downloading the new version from the SkyMate website (<http://www.skymate.com/downloads.html>). (The current version of the NMFS VMS activity code and catch reporting software is **version 3.86**. The version number is visible on the SkyMate screen in the top left corner.) If SkyMate users fail to update their software by April 1, 2007, NMFS will require that vessels return to port to update the software and vessels could be subject to enforcement action.

Vessel owners who are having difficulty upgrading their software should contact SkyMate, as follows:

SkyMate, Inc: 866-SKYMATE (toll-free) or 703-961-5800 (available 24-hours a day) or support@skymate.com



DECLARING A VMS CODE FOR EACH TRIP

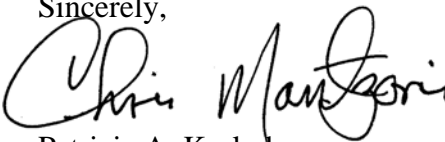
All vessel owners/operators with a VMS unit on board their vessels must declare their intent to fish via VMS prior to leaving port for each trip. Vessels have been allowed to sail under the same VMS code selected from the previous fishing trip. However, it has come to our attention that, because some owner/operators forget to select a new VMS code when changing their area fished, the information obtained from these trips is not reliable. Therefore, vessel owners/operators must select a new VMS declaration for each trip, regardless of whether it is the same type of trip as the previous one. Please note that, if you do not declare a valid activity code prior to leaving port, NMFS will require that you return to port and select a valid VMS declaration prior to sailing. Further, sailing without declaring an activity code prior to the start of each fishing trip is in violation of the Northeast fisheries regulations and may result in enforcement action. Vessel owners who have questions regarding selecting an activity code declaration should contact the NMFS VMS team for assistance (see above for contact information).

For assistance in selecting the proper code or for other questions regarding VMS operations, contact the NMFS VMS team for assistance at:

NMFS VMS Team: 978-281-9213 or NMFS.OLE.NE@NOAA.GOV

For questions regarding VMS regulations, please call the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315.

Sincerely,

for 
Patricia A. Kurkul

Regional Administrator