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Structuring Routine Maritime Communication

Welcome to DigiMar videos!

In this video we will learn more about how to structure routine maritime communication.

As already established in other DigiMar videos, routine maritime communication is ship to shore communication, which is in practice VTS (Vessel Traffic Service) communication. After watching this video you will be able to:

- 1) explain how information in routine messages is organised
- 2) distinguish between the different moves of a basic routine message
- 3) role-play a call with a vessel, using closed loop/read back techniques

When the VTS operator communicates via radio, it is very important that the message will be clear but it is also important that the information is unambiguous and organised in a logical order.

Generally, the recommended organisation for information that is sent by VTS will therefore be to identify themselves first, to describe the situation as they see it, and to share important information for safe maritime traffic. It is also important that the VTS operator will confirm or ask confirmation for the information that has been exchanged when that is needed.

In turn, vessels will also identify themselves and give their position, describe their intentions and ask for what they need to maintain safe maritime traffic. And vessels too must ask for confirmation of information, when needed.

According to the IALA Guidelines, the standard moves of information exchange in routine maritime communication will be to establish contact, exchange information, mark the end of each message when needed, and mark the end of the conversation when all information has been shared, and confirmed. The use of words 'over' and 'out', is very important in the exchange, in particular when radio connection is poor. For example, the use of the word over will always mark that the sender of the information expects a reply. This can help when connection is poor and messages are difficult to understand.

But let us have a look at one example. DigiMar VTS calls MV Sunrise to ask for more identification.

VTS	VESSEL
MV Sunrise. This is DigiMar VTS. Over.	DigiMar VTS. This is Sunrise. Over.
MV Sunrise. Question. What is your call sign? I repeat. What is your call sign?	DigiMar VTS. This is Sunrise. My call sign is WFSK2. Over.



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MV Sunrise. This is Digimar VTS. Your call sign is
WFSK2. Out.

In this example, the VTS operator has used all recommended moves for routine maritime communication. He has made contact with the vessel, used the message marker 'question', asked for information that he needed, used closed-loop communication, and marked the end of the conversation.

In the VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology published by the International Association of Lighthouse Authorities you will find more suggestions on how to structure routine communication messages on pages 9–10.

We hope that this video has been useful and that it will help you to successfully complete the chatbot exercises available at: <https://digimar.si/category/digital-tools/chatbots/>

Thank you for watching and stay tuned for more Digimar videos on effective maritime communication!