

CIRCULAR LETTER 23/2003
11 March 2003

IHO SPECIAL PUBLICATION N° 55 (S-55)
STATUS OF HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEYING AND NAUTICAL CHARTING WORLD-WIDE

Dear Hydrographer,

1. The stipulations in Regulation 9 in Chapter V of SOLAS relating to national hydrographic obligations, underline the importance of the policy guidance in IHO Publication M-2 and the need for IHO strategic planning to be informed with a clear over-view of deficiencies in the 3 core areas of Hydrographic Surveys, Nautical Charting and Maritime Safety Information (MSI). In this context, the Directing Committee places the highest priority on the review and reissue of Special Publication S-55, "Status of Hydrographic Surveying and Nautical Charting Worldwide". The review would also seek to bring the content of S-59 "Status of Hydrographic Surveying and Nautical Charting in Antarctica" into a common format within the worldwide span of S-55. This would reflect the IMO remit on IHO to report the status of Hydrographic Surveying and Nautical charting in all remote areas.

2. The Directing Committee urges that this task be given the highest priority and support. To this end, the UK National Hydrographer has made Captain Mike Barritt available to assist with the work on S-55, at no cost to the Organization. While executing his assignment for the Organization through the IHB, Captain Barritt will liaise with Member States, non-member states, IMO and other organizations, as necessary.

3. Experience with previous editions has shown that it demands active contribution and co-operation amongst Member States. Regional Hydrographic Commissions have a key role to play, and it is requested that an update of the S-55 database be made a standing agenda item for their meetings. Captain Barritt will attend as many of the forthcoming Regional Hydrographic Commission meetings as possible to describe the proposed content and data collection requirements and to provide, as necessary, advice and support to Member and non-Member States in their analysis of their national sea areas,.

4. The Directing Committee notes that, despite the effort committed to the production of the first two editions of S-55, there were significant gaps in data often in maritime areas identified as of vital importance to the promotion of safe navigation and protection of the environment. It is clear from users comments that the volume and format of data that is required, presented significant challenges to many countries. The Directing Committee proposes a more focused approach to the third edition. The resulting document, whose outline of proposed contents is provided in the Annex, is envisaged to be an effective tool for high-level discussions with national governments and funding agencies as well as the IHO input to the United Nations' Global Maritime Assessment. Efforts should be devoted to achieving the clearest analysis of the three key data sets:

- a. Status of Hydrographic Surveys. Several Member States have represented that the percentage tables in previous editions do not facilitate an accurate picture of the status of surveying in their waters. There are other factors that point to the need to adopt a different format:

(1) Given that the strategic focus of S-55 should be to provide data to support prioritisation of regional co-operative projects and assistance to individual countries, the analysis must reflect maritime shipping routes and port usage when high-lighting area deficiencies. The analysis in Section E of the first edition was not revalidated in 1995-96.

(2) Whilst the current categories of ‘Adequate’, ‘Re-survey Required’, and ‘Unsurveyed’ lend themselves to negotiations with non-specialist decision-makers, they must clearly be underpinned by more detailed national analysis against the standards in S-44. The South West Pacific Regional Hydrographic Commission has proposed that this analysis should be based on CATZOC criteria encompassing bathymetric precision and seafloor coverage. For many States, however, an analysis such as that in S-59 may be more practical and readily achieved.

b. Status of Charting. It is proposed that priority should be given to listing ENCs, Raster Navigational Charts, and INT charts in the new edition. The utility of this table would be vastly increased if the relationship of charts and source data could be illustrated, as is achieved with the overlays in S-59.

c. Status of Organised Collection and Promulgation of Nautical Information (MSI including GMDSS). S-55 should give a tabulated summary of the status of national organisation for the issue of Local, Coastal and NAVAREA Warnings, and for promulgation of information on Ports and Harbours (including regular communication with the Hydrographic Office which has charting responsibility). S-55 should also tabulate GMDSS status (Master Plan, A1 Area, A2 Area, A3 Area, NAVTEX, SafetyNET).

5. A focus on these data sets should also make the task of maintenance of S-55 much more practical. Indeed it may be possible to achieve continuous update for S-55 and other reference publications if, alongside the urgent exercise of reissuing S-55, the Bureau and Member States can redirect their efforts towards the establishment of a layered digital database.

6. Member States are requested to comment on the above proposals **by 15 May 2003** in order to contribute their insights to the early development and circulation of a questionnaire.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

(original signed)

Captain Hugo GORZIGLIA
Director

**IHO SPECIAL PUBLICATION S-55
“STATUS OF HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEYING AND NAUTICAL CHARTING WORLD-WIDE”**

PROPOSED CONTENT OF THIRD EDITION

Executive Summary:	S-55 contains data to inform decisions on support to regional and national efforts to implement the hydrographic obligations stipulated in SOLAS Chapter V and elaborated in IHO Publication M-2. Key area deficiencies highlighted.
Introduction:	
Background:	Brief summary of previous IHO analysis.
Purpose:	Reliable and meaningful data base for specialist advice to decision-makers.
Method:	Focus on data relating to the three core hydrographic competencies.
Hydrographic impact:	Significance of hydrography for maritime shipping routes (international, regional, and national, including inland maritime areas), ports and port approaches, fisheries, tourism – large and small craft, offshore industry. List key areas of concern highlighted by IMO and other responsible organisations.
Status of Hydrographic Surveys:	Refer to Annex A and highlight significant deficiencies.
Status of Nautical Charting:	Refer to Annex B and highlight significant deficiencies.
Status of MSI:	Refer to Annex C and highlight significant deficiencies.
Conclusions and Recommendations:	Draw out priorities for assistance to enable SOLAS V obligations to be met, paying particular attention to geographical areas highlighted by IMO and other responsible organisations
Annexes: (Content of Annexes to be developed)	
A.	Summary Table/s of national status of hydrographic surveys
B.	Summary Table/s of national status of nautical charting.
C.	Summary Table/s of national MSI status