



S3/8151/CHRIS

CIRCULAR LETTER 26/2005  
10 March 2005

**S-57, EDITION 4.0**

- References: 1) IHB Circular Letter 83/2004, dated 7 December 2004.  
2) IHB Circular Letter 22/2005, dated 23 February 2005

Dear Hydrographer,

The Committee on Hydrographic Requirements for Information Systems (CHRIS) and its subsidiary working groups have been developing, in accordance with the IHO Work Program, Edition 4 of S-57, *The IHO Transfer Standard for Digital Hydrographic Data*. As the Electronic Navigational Charts (ENC) Product Specification has been physically and psychologically tied to S-57, the prospect of a new edition has created concern and confusion among Member States and others involved in various aspects of ENC production, distribution and display.

In the attached letter, the Chairman of CHRIS clearly lays out the current situation and the issues the IHO and others must address as S-57 evolves to deal with ensuring safety of navigation and with the broader use of hydrographic data beyond safety of navigation applications.

At the core of the Chairman's letter is the call for active discussion and participation by all concerned in formulating the way ahead especially as it relates to the ENC Product Specification. This may be accomplished by joining the discussion group *S-57 ENC Product Specifications Discussion Forum* hosted on the IHO website at [www.iho.shom.fr](http://www.iho.shom.fr) - via Committees > CHRIS > TSMAD Sub WG, or directly at <http://195.217.61.120/smf/>. An insightful paper *The ENC Product Specification Debate* intended to stimulate the discussion has been posted to this site. Of course your active membership in CHRIS and its subsidiary working groups ensures your currency in and input into technical advances of IHO standards.

In a related matter, the S-57 Edition 4.0 information paper referred to in CL 83/2004 and posted on the IHO website ([http://www.iho.shom.fr/ECDIS/S-57\\_Ed4\\_Information\\_Paper\\_ver1.1.pdf](http://www.iho.shom.fr/ECDIS/S-57_Ed4_Information_Paper_ver1.1.pdf)) has been updated to alleviate the concerns regarding S-57 Edition 4.0 and the ENC Product Specification 3.1.

On behalf of the Directing Committee  
Yours sincerely,

Rear Admiral Kenneth BARBOR  
Director

Encls: Letter of 2 March 2005 from the CHRIS Chairman

Copy to: CIRM (Mr. Mike Rambaut)

# Committee on Hydrographic Requirements for Information Systems (CHRIS)



## **President, IHB**

For Information: Director 1, IHB  
PAC, IHB

Dear Admiral Maratos,

As Chairman of the IHO Committee on Hydrographic Requirements for Information Systems (CHRIS), it has been brought to my attention that there is concern about the development of S-57e4.0 as an updated hydrographic data transfer standard, its possible impact on the production and implementation of S57e3.1 ENC's, and on associated ECDIS software. This is as a result of the information paper posted on the IHO website titled: "The Next Edition of IHO S57 (4.0)" (as reported in CL 83/2004 dated 7 December 2004, and posted at: [http://www.iho.shom.fr/ECDIS/S-57\\_Ed4\\_Information\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.iho.shom.fr/ECDIS/S-57_Ed4_Information_Paper.pdf)) and more recently in statements contained in IHO C/L 22/2005.

The CHRIS is very aware of the significant investment and dependence that IHO M/S, ECDIS manufacturers, ENC production software developers and many others have on the current edition of the S57e3.1 ENC Product Specification (Prod Spec). For this reason, the S-57e3.1 ENC Prod Spec cannot be cancelled or replaced without very careful consideration.

No decision has been made to supersede the S-57e3.1 ENC prod spec with an S-57e4.0 ENC Prod Spec. So far, the only Prod Spec that has been endorsed for future development is for bathymetric/hydrographic data (see IHO C/L 18/99). However, little work has been done on this. In any case, neither this nor the development of S-57e4.0 will impact on current ENC production, ENC distribution, ECDIS manufacture or ECDIS usage.

Of course, the CHRIS needs to look to the future and ensure that the IHO's technical standards remain relevant and appropriate. It is in this context that discussion has commenced on the long-term future of the S-57e3.1 Prod Spec. In doing so, the CHRIS believes that full consultation with and consideration of the views from those potentially affected by any proposed changes to IHO technical standards and guidelines are critically important to the process.

In accordance with this principle, the TSMAD WG are setting up a discussion group dedicated to the topic of the future of the S57 ENC Prod Spec. It will be available through the IHO website at [www.iho.shom.fr](http://www.iho.shom.fr) – via Committees→CHRIS→TSMAD SubWG to encourage debate over the long term future of the ENC Prod Spec and to identify all the issues.

In addition to this, I intend to follow up on this discussion by holding an "ECDIS Stakeholders Forum" in conjunction with the next CHRIS meeting. The ECDIS Stakeholders Forum will take place in Rostock, Germany on 6-7 September 2005. The following questions will need to be answered:

- Should the S-57e3.1 Prod Spec stay frozen indefinitely?
- What are the important limitations of the s-57e3.1 Prod Spec?
- Are these limitations sufficiently serious that an upgrade/improvement program is necessary?
- If so, how can an upgrade/improvement program be achieved with the minimum impact on all concerned?

The Stakeholders Forum will be open to all parties that have an interest or involvement in ECDIS and ECDIS chart data. The results from the Forum will then be considered by CHRIS in the Meeting that follows immediately. As such, the Forum will be a significant opportunity for all “ECDIS stakeholders” to enlighten the CHRIS and influence the future direction of ECDIS and ENC standards.

In the meantime, I stress once again, that there are No current plans to supersede or replace the current S57e3.1 ENC Product Specification. Furthermore, no significant changes will take place without wide consultation with all the parties likely to be affected by any changes.

I seek your assistance in promulgating this statement as widely as possible. Furthermore, I encourage all readers to consider the issues surrounding the S57 ENC Product Specification and to contribute to the forthcoming discussions both on the WWW and in Rostock.



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Chairman, CHRIS

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2 March 2005

