

ATIS-Upgrade for your ICOM VHF!

If you are a UK boat owner planning to sail on European inland waterways this year, your VHF radio transceiver may need reprogramming with a valid ATIS number.



So what is ATIS?

ATIS, stands for Automatic Transmitter Identification System, not to be confused with AIS). The ATIS system is used on inland waterways in various countries in mainland Europe. At the end of every transmission the radio sends out a unique FFSK data signal, heard as a scratchy noise at the end of every transmission. This signal contains the user or ship's unique ATIS call sign which identifies you to marine coast stations and inland stations.

Do I need a new radio or can my current equipment be upgraded?

Icom's current range of VHF Handheld and VHF/DSC fixed marine radios are ATIS (Automatic Transmission Identification System) capable. They can be simply programmed by Icom UK or your local dealer to work on this system.

How will my Icom marine radio work once it has my new ATIS number programmed into it?

Your Icom VHF marine radio has two channel banks (or groups) 'USA' and 'INT'. UK sets have two additional channels pre-enabled in the 'INT' group, these are known as channels M1 & M2. The USA group is used in American waters and has many of the same channels as the UK's ('INT') group, but some channels (although they have the same channel numbers) have different operating frequencies, hence the need for two groups.

Having been programmed with your new ATIS number, your radio will now have three channel groups; INT, USA & ATIS.

The ATIS feature will be enabled on the radio while the ATIS group is selected, when travelling into European waters. To make sure ATIS is enabled, you simply need to toggle the radio into the ATIS group. When you travel back to UK waters you just need to toggle back to the 'INT' group and the ATIS features will be disabled.

PLEASE NOTE, IT IS A MISCONCEPTION THAT ATIS-ENABLED RADIOS MUST BE PROGRAMMED WHEN ENTERING AND LEAVING MAINLAND EUROPEAN WATERS. IT IS SIMPLY A MATTER OF SELECTING THE CORRECT GROUP.

Will existing DSC functions work if I have my radio reprogrammed with ATIS?

Your DSC will work and will not be affected by being programmed for ATIS. You are advised that DSC use is not permitted or supported on inland waterways throughout Europe. Also scanning or dual/tri-watch is not permitted, these features must not be used in ATIS mode.

Can I get my handheld VHF programmed if I don't have an MMSI number?

Unfortunately ATIS numbers will only be given to boat owners who have an MMSI number. If you are sailing to Europe it may be appropriate to consider purchasing a VHF/DSC radio, as all European countries will recognise this.

What do I need to do to comply?

Before contacting ICOM UK, simply e-mail OFCOM at: licensingcentre@ofcom.org.uk with your name, vessel name, vessel callsign and MMSI number (which will be sent to the

Belgian Institute of Postal Services and Telecommunications (BIPT). OFCOM will then check their records and issue you with a Notice of Variation (NOV) to your licence, this may be sent to you electronically. You can then contact us, or your local Icom dealer, with your newly issued ATIS number and have it programmed into your radio.

PLEASE NOTE:

- As part of this process your data will be given to the BIPT. You must print a copy of the Basel Agreement from: www.rainwat.bipt.be/rainboat.html - and keep it with the NOV and your boats radio licence.
- You must familiarise yourself with the Basel Agreement.
- The UK is NOT acceded to the Basel Agreement.
- Whilst overseas you will be under the jurisdiction of the authority in that country.
- RAINWAT is the "Regional Arrangement Concerning the Radiotelephone Service on Inland Waterways" which, through the Basel Agreement, has introduced the Automatic Transmitter Identification System (ATIS) for vessels making VHF transmissions whilst on the inland waterways of the signatory countries: Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; France; Germany; Hungary; Luxembourg; Moldova; The Netherlands; Poland; Romania; Slovakia; Switzerland; Serbia & Montenegro.

