### AFMA takes a fresh look at ‘Manual Reporting’

With its continuing focus on VMS compliance, AFMA recognises the fact that, like all technical systems, VMS units do suffer breakdowns from time to time. Often these breakdowns occur at sea making it necessary for AFMA to consider alternate arrangements. One of these arrangements is to allow ‘manual reporting’ for the remainder of a trip.

AFMA has recently reviewed its policy on manual reporting to better reflect both the principles of AFMA’s overall compliance policy, its VMS compliance program and the requirements of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

The main principle to bear in mind is that being allowed to “Manual Report” is not an automatic right, it is a privilege afforded operators on the basis that they comply with all the requirements.

When Will Manual Reporting Be Permitted?

Manual reporting will generally[[1]](#footnote-1) **only** be permitted where; (1) a unit has failed “at-sea” as the result of a mechanical failure, (2) where AFMA considers the level of risk[[2]](#footnote-2) is low, and (3) only until the completion of the current trip.

What if Manual reporting is not permitted?

If AFMA decides not to grant permission for an operator/boat to manual report, and the VMS remains non-operational it will order the boat to return to, and remain in, port.

How can I apply to Manual report?

In most circumstances AFMA will contact you when it finds a unit is not reporting, and will advise you if manual reporting is permissible. If you want to make an application directly you must contact AFMA during business hours either by phone (02 6225 5542) or email (VMSreporting@afma.gov.au).

What Am I Required To Do When Manual Reporting?

When you have been granted permission to manual report you must;

* Report the boats position every 4 Hours; and
* Include in the report the Boats Name, Distinguishing Symbol, Time and Date of position, and the boats position in Latitude and Longitude (in degrees, minutes, seconds).

 How do I manual report?

All manual reports can be made by either phoning (02) 6225 5369 or via Email: VMSreporting@afma.gov.au. The AFMA Duty Officer is available in an emergency on 0419 205 329.

What happens if I don’t comply with the Manual Reporting requirements?

If an operator is found to have not complied with the manual reporting requirements, the boat will be ordered to return to port immediately and the operator/concession holder may face further compliance action in accordance with AFMAs VMS compliance Program.

What about once I get back?

You must make immediate arrangements to have the unit repaired or replaced. You will not be allowed to depart port again[[3]](#footnote-3) until the VMS unit is operational.

If you have any queries about VMS manual reporting contact Tod Spencer, Senior Manager National Compliance Strategy on (02) 6225 5312 or tod.spencer@afma.gov.au.

1. Manual reporting may be allowed in other ‘exceptional’ circumstances. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. AFMA determines the risk level through an assessment of; the boats area of operation, RFMO requirements and prior compliance history of the boat/operator. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Except in exceptional circumstances [↑](#footnote-ref-3)