

Automatic Identification System

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The Automatic Identification System (AIS), is a short-range coastal tracking system that uses radio waves to identify and position ships and shore stations. AIS devices include a data radio unit and a GPS receiver. This allows ships around the world to identify each other and share important information with other ships, as well as with coast traffic centers and land stations.

However, proper function of the AIS is dependent on accurate vessel data entry, including entering the proper ship type code. The accurate display of a vessel's full information becomes particularly important in situations that prevent vessels from seeing each other until they are in very close proximity. The AIS carriage and operating requirements are found in Title 33 Code of Federal Regulations 164.46, <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2012-title33-vol2/CFR-2012-title33-vol2-sec164-46>, which includes a requirement for the accurate input and upkeep of all AIS data fields. The Coast Guard Navigation Center has produced the AIS Encoding Guide, <https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/AIS/AISGuide.pdf>, which provides instructions on how to populate all data fields in AIS.