



# HOMEPORT

US DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

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## USCG MSIB 20-20: Performing a VHF Marine Radio Check

**Summary:** USCG Marine Safety Information Bulletin 20-20, Change 1, Performing a VHF Marine Radio Check, issued October 29, 2020. This update to MSIB 20-20 provides guidance for merchant mariners to conduct a automated VHF marine radio system check.

### Performing a VHF Marine Radio Check

**Sea Tow Automated Radio Check System no longer available:**

For several years, Sea Tow operated an Automated Radio Check System available on VHF-FM CH 24 and CH 28 for the benefit of mariners in over 130 locations. However, this was discontinued on October 2nd, 2020.

**How to test a VHF Radio using Rescue 21 on VHF-FM Channel 70:**

For DSC radios equipped with a Test Call feature, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) continues to offer an automated DSC Test Call capability from each of its Rescue 21 coastal stations on VHF-FM CH 70 (156.525MHZ). (All fixed mount marine radios certified by the Federal Communications Commission since 1999 are required to have a DSC capability. All such radios sold since 2011 must also have a DSC test call capability.) Marine radios transmitting and successfully receiving a response from a DSC test call can be expected to operate acceptably in the voice mode as well. Test transmissions can be made to another vessel by using a routine individual call to the other radio's Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI). Please consult your radio manufacturer's manual to determine proper operation.

To perform a DSC Test Call with the USCG, enter the coast station group identity "003669999" into the radio's DSC memory. Once stored, a DSC test call can be made by executing the following three steps:

- (1) Select "Test Call" from the radio's DSC menu,
- (2) Select the USCG number entered into memory, and
- (3) Transmit the call.

The radio display should indicate when that test call is acknowledged and display the acknowledging station's nine-digit identity. That identity may be different than the group identity previously entered into memory.

Under no circumstances should a DSC Distress Alert be sent to test your radio.

**Voice Radio Checks:**

For radio checks by voice with other boaters, please use VHF-FM CH 09 (156.45MHZ). The USCG does not monitor CH 09. Please refrain from using VHF-FM CH 16 (156.8MHZ).

Please send questions concerning this notice to USCG Spectrum Management and Communications Policy Division (CG-672) at [HQS-SMB-CG-672@USCG.MIL](mailto:HQS-SMB-CG-672@USCG.MIL) or to the Coast Guard Navigation Center's "Contact Us" page by selecting "Maritime Telecommunications" as the subject. More information is available at [www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=DSCTesting](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=DSCTesting).

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- [DHS \(http://www.dhs.gov/\)](http://www.dhs.gov/)
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- [USA.gov \(https://www.usa.gov/\)](https://www.usa.gov/)
- [WhiteHouse.gov \(https://www.whitehouse.gov/\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/)

## COAST GUARD QUICK LINKS

- [CGMIX / PSIX \(http://cgmix.uscg.mil/\)](http://cgmix.uscg.mil/)
- [Coast Guard Auxiliary \(http://www.cgaux.org/\)](http://www.cgaux.org/)
- [Mariner Credentialing \(http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/\)](http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/)
- [Navigation Center \(http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/\)](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/)
- [Ship's Arrivals \(http://www.nvmc.uscg.gov/\)](http://www.nvmc.uscg.gov/)
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