

Jan De Nul Officer Dubs Iridium GMDSS 'Major Step Forward' for Maritime Safety

As the Chief Mate of the M/V Simon Stevin, Julien Salmain ensures teamwork among his crew as they lay stone foundations for undersea pipelines and cables, windmill foundations, and many other installations. Carrying up to 32,000 tons of stones, the 200-meter M/V Simon Stevin of Jan De Nul Group and her sister vessel, M/V Joseph, are the largest rock installation vessels in the world.

Working at sea can create a high-risk environment for seafarers. Consequently, safety is paramount and Julien's primary responsibility. Having worked 18 years in the maritime industry, he has appreciated how safety equipment and services continue to become more user-friendly. A rapidly changing environment would naturally create challenges, but during an emergency situation, every second counts.

"You will have to act quickly and effectively," Julien said, "so the easiest way to reach emergency services is the best."

Julien and his crewmates now benefit from what he calls "a major step forward for maritime safety:" the Iridium® Global Maritime Distress Safety System (GMDSS).

About GMDSS

Since 1999, GMDSS has been the stalwart for oceangoing vessels to receive navigational, safety, and weather information via satellite from national Maritime Safety Information Providers (MSIPs) and coastal agencies. Vessels use GMDSS to send alerts to Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs) authorities during a distress situation. The RCCs communicate with the stricken vessel during the distress, coordinating resources that may aid in a rescue.

However, the geostationary satellites delivering GMDSS from the incumbent provider did not provide truly global coverage, with only Sea Areas 1-3 covered. If a vessel operated in polar regions, then it was required to have MF/HF equipment fitted for Sea Area A4 compliance. Additionally, in the event of a distress situation, a mariner could only send a GMDSS alert to an RCC using a text-based solution. This meant valuable information could be missed – and vital seconds lost during the rescue coordination.

The Iridium Advantage

In 2020, Iridium received International Maritime Organization (IMO) recognition as a GMDSS provider. Finally, mariners have a choice in safety services selection.



Julien Salmain, Chief Mate of the M/V Simon Stevin

Iridium GMDSS offers several major improvements over the previous option, including:

- **Coverage:** Iridium GMDSS delivers truly global connectivity – including polar regions.
- **Capability:** The Lars Thrane LT-3100S terminal offers a complete GMDSS solution, incorporating distress alerting, Maritime Safety Information (MSI), Long Range Identification Tracking (LRIT), Ship Security Alerting System (SSAS), and commercial services.
- **Cost:** Implementation and operation are less when compared to other GMDSS systems.



Iridium GMDSS also includes Iridium SafetyCastSM, which delivers important navigational and meteorological information to vessels equipped with Iridium services, thereby enabling proactive safety measures.

"The integration of GMDSS, SSAS and LRIT into a single terminal provides a cost-effective safety solution," said Kyle Hurst, Iridium Director Maritime Safety & Security Services.

Within seconds of the press of a red button, the crew of the stricken vessel can communicate verbally with rescue authorities and coordinate an effective response.

"From a mariner's point of view, using the LT-3100S doesn't take a steep learning curve," Kyle said. "Day-to-day operations are simplified, such as reviewing MSI messages, which can be viewed through a connected computer using the LT-3100S web interface. The integrated telephone handset allows for simple voice calling without the need for additional equipment."

The Impact

"Jan De Nul plans to roll out Iridium GMDSS in all retrofits and newly built vessels," said Nils Crabeel, Communication & Network Officer at Jan De Nul Group. "Having LRIT and SSAS alongside GMDSS in one terminal is an important advantage – as are both safety and non-safety voice capabilities."

"Iridium GMDSS gives maritime safety a voice," said Wouter Deknopper, Iridium Vice President & General Manager, Maritime Line of Business. "A wide range of vessels, from merchant ships to military and even yachts and small leisure craft, have already installed Iridium GMDSS. The feedback has been resounding: Iridium GMDSS represents an evolution in maritime safety services, one that Iridium believes will save lives of seafarers."

One such seafarer agrees.

"The introduction of a safety voice option is a major step forward for maritime safety," Julien said. "Simplicity is key, because in an emergency, people don't always think clearly. When in distress, you know immediately that your message reached the right persons, who can give the right advice and support you. The automatic distress call to the RCC allows the crew to perform fewer manual actions and avoid wasting time in a critical moment."



Jan De Nul Communication & Network Officer Nils Crabeel, left, and Iridium VP & GM, Maritime Line of Business Wouter Deknopper

To learn more about
Iridium GMDSS, visit
[www.iridium.com/
services/gmdss](http://www.iridium.com/services/gmdss).

