

ROYAL YACHTING ASSOCIATION RESPONSE TO OFCOM CONSULTATION

Implementation measures to require compliance with international guidelines for limiting exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF)

About the RYA

The RYA is the national governing body for all forms of sailing and power boating within the UK. Originally formed in 1875 to bring some form of organisation to yacht racing the organisation has evolved significantly since then and now covers a wide range of areas across both leisure and commercial boating. It is a not-for-profit members organisation with a membership in the region of 112,000 people who have interests in all forms of boating on the coast and inland waterways. It has nearly 1,500 affiliated clubs and classes.

The RYA manages the GB sailing Team and is responsible for one of the UK's most successful Olympic medal winning sports.

The RYA also sets and maintains an international standard for recreational boat training through a network of over 2400 RYA Recognised Training Centres in 58 countries. On average approximately 270,000 people per year complete RYA training courses. RYA training courses form the basis for the small craft training of lifeboat crews, police officers and the Royal Navy and are also adopted as a template for training in many other countries throughout the world.

The RYA is a Certifying Authority authorised by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency [MCA] to certificate Small Commercial Vessels in accordance with the SCV Codes of Practice.

The RYA is responsible for the delivery of training and examination of the UK Short-Range Certificate VHF Radio course through its network of RYA training centres on behalf of the MCA.

Ofcom invites comments on the following three questions

- 1. Please provide feedback on the additions, amendments and clarifications we have made to the wording of the licence condition to implement our decisions on the scope of the licence condition in our October 2020 Statement, giving reasons for your response.*
- 2. Please provide feedback on the additions and clarifications to our 'Guidance on EMF Compliance and Enforcement', giving reasons for your response.*
- 3. Please provide feedback on the trial version of our EMF calculator, giving reasons for your response.*

RYA response to the three questions

The RYA welcomes the amendments made to the wording of the licence condition, specifically the exemption of the need to comply with ICNIRP general public limits when radio equipment is being used for the purpose of seeking emergency assistance or reporting or responding to an emergency situation including search and rescue activities and maritime emergency communications.

Following the meeting between the RYA and Ofcom held on 12th November, the RYA is reassured that Ofcom recognises that marine radio communications equipment is intrinsic to the safety of life at sea and that their approach to enforcement needs to be proportionate to the minimal risks presented to the general public by maritime communications equipment.

The RYA is further reassured that Ofcom has highlighted that compliance with ICNIRP general public limits could be achieved through compliance with the equipment manufacturers' installation instructions and that retaining a copy of these instructions with the radio equipment would be considered sufficient to comply with the requirement to keep records. It is recognised that, when purchasing a pre-owned vessel, the original manufacturers' documentation may no longer be present, however, most instruction manuals are now available online. Where compliance with the manufacturer's instructions cannot be confirmed, the Ofcom online EMF emissions calculator should be used.

The RYA welcomes the introduction of the Ofcom online EMF emissions calculator and looks forward to the final version being made available. We recognise the elementary nature of the calculator and believe that, with appropriate guidance being made available, the vast majority of marine radio operators will be able to make meaningful use of it.

Both Ofcom and the RYA identified the need for simple guidance for the recreational boating sector, as such both organisations have agreed to work in collaboration to produce sector specific guidance which the RYA will promulgate to its members and the wider boating public through its network of recognised training centres, affiliated clubs, website and social media channels.

Conclusion

The RYA is grateful that Ofcom has listened to the RYA's concerns with the original proposal. The RYA is confident that the proposals discussed between Ofcom and the RYA on 12 November 2020 are proportionate and pragmatic and will ensure that the measures implemented to limiting exposure to electromagnetic fields will not adversely affect the recreational boating market and safety of life at sea.