

Marine Communication

(Speech held by Leon at Open House, Ellös, 23 August 2003)

Which Configuration for Me?

Coastal

1. VHF
2. GSM
3. EPIRB
4. Navtex

Offshore

Voice + E-mails

5. SSB/HAM
6. Iridium

Voice + E-mail + Surfing + HSD

5. Fleet 33
6. Inm-C
7. SSB/HAM

and/or

Conclusion

It is, of course, very difficult to give a direct suggestion, what to install on your boat.

But taking the various needs and keeping safety communication in mind, I have made up the above sheet. The small "EPIRBs" and "Cell Phones" are to symbolize whether this is a **marine safety communication equipment** or a **mobile telephone**.

As "Coastal Sailing", I define the whole Baltic and possible sails over to Scotland, for instance, or following the coastline to the Mediterranean, thus, in other words, within reach of VHF. Here, would put the highest priority on a VHF with DSC connected to a GPS. Secondly, the GSM cell phone is very convenient to make day-to-day phone calls and surfing the internet. Heading sometimes "offshore", i.e. outside VHF-range (30 nm from shore), but not needing any e-mail facility while underway, I would continue with an EPIRB enabling distress communication also outside VHF and GSM range. Finally, I have added an inexpensive Navtex (for European waters) since it gives weather and navigation warnings so easily and practically. If you have a TV onboard or are very good at keeping the times to listen to weather broadcasts on the radio, the Navtex could, of course, be left out. But once you have it, you find it very convenient to receive weather and navigational information continuously. With a TV

onboard, beware of the fact that the language on text-TV or broadcasts are in local language mainly and that no navigational warnings are being broadcasted.

For serious long distance cruisers and livaboards heading offshore, I have distinguished between the need of voice and E-mails (with very small attachments) and the extended need to also include Surfing the Internet and High Speed Data (HSD) from remote places and at sea.

For the first category I suggest a Marine SSB with HAM frequencies enabled. As a second option, the Iridium phone becomes more and more popular among sailors. For some, the priority might be the other way round, i.e. in first place install an Iridium and maybe skip the SSB totally. You should, however, know that most long distance cruisers today have SSB's installed and thus it is great to be part of that sailing community. In the Caribbean, for instance, the SSB is the primary means of communications between sailors and the HAM community is very active. Many also use the SSB for free e-mailing. If you go for the Iridium without an SSB, please note that Iridium has no Safety Alert possibility. So if you go for Iridium only, please consider to also install an Inmarsat C for safety purposes.

For the second category of you wanting to surf the internet, send and receive big files, always be online and pay by the amount of data while sailing offshore, I suggest the Fleet33. But be aware of its high cost, both hardware and airtime! Fleet33 gives you all, except for the safety communication, which is vital for distress calls. Thus, I would definitely add an Inmarsat C or possibly an SSB to keep full safety communication available.