

STEP 1 - OBTAINING YOUR HF RADIO LICENSE

Marine Radio Licensing

In simple terms ACMA stipulates the following licensing requirements in respect to marine radio use on leisure craft in Australia:

Equipment on Vessel	Minimum Operator Qualifications
VHF marine radio ONLY (with or without digital selective calling facilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marine Radio Operators Certificate of Proficiency OR• Marine Radio Operators VHF Certificate of Proficiency
VHF marine radio (with or without digital selective calling facilities) AND MF/HF marine radio (with or without digital selective calling facilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marine Radio Operators Certificate of Proficiency

As the sending of emails is to be via HF radio, you will note that it is a requirement that at least someone on board the vessel has a Marine Radio Operators Certificate of Proficiency (hereinafter "MROCP"). This person can then authorise others on board to operate the HF radio pursuant to his or her certificate.

To obtain the MROCP an examination must be completed – training and testing is conducted by many marine rescue organisations, boating clubs and colleges of technical and further education. For what is involved refer this internet link:

http://vmr.herveybay.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=49&Itemid=75

Alternately you can self study and then contact your local "invigilator" for completion of the examination. The course and examination are not difficult.

Supervision of the licensing process has been delegated out by the ACMA to the Office of Maritime Communications (OMC) at the Australian Maritime College in Launceston, Tasmania.

The Marine Radio Operators Handbook which contains the knowledge needed to procure a MROCP (this is your self study guide) can actually be downloaded in PDF from the OMC website here <http://www.amc.edu.au/handbook>

You can also find a list of accredited Invigilators (your closest examiner) at the OMC website here: <http://www.amc.edu.au/invigilator-search>

Once you have your MROCP in hand you are then qualified to own / operate your radio - but there is still the additional step of applying for your radio license callsign (this is also done via application to the ACMA). The radio license attracts an annual fee and is issued automatically to any applicant that has an MROCP. It is the unique identifier that you will use on air and is also required for membership of the Sailmail Association (refer below)

A key further key condition is that you are only able to operate your Marine HF radio on a boat - ie it is not permissible to set up a second marine HF radio at home under your MROCP.

Ham Radio Licensing

Amateur or Ham radio operators are simply people who just love radio (it is their hobby) and they set up radio stations (under a separate form of government license) with a view to communicating with other enthusiasts around the world.

Many people sailing the world will also obtain a ham radio license in addition to getting the MROCP discussed above.

The advantage in having a ham radio license is that you gain access to a second network for the sending and receiving of your emails.

It is also often easier to communicate with hams whilst out in open water as, being enthusiasts, they have larger antenna systems and more sophisticated receiving stations than your average onshore marine receiving station.

The licensing arrangements for ham radio are similar to the MROCP. Licensing and related testing has been outsourced to the Wireless Institute of Australia "WIA" (the representative body for hams in Australia) which in turn, has sub-delegated training and testing to local ham radio clubs.

The entry ham radio radio license (Foundation License) has a similar degree of difficulty to the MROCP. Unfortunately the Foundation license does not permit digital mode transmissions (transmission of your emails is via a digital mode of communication) and thus the "Standard" ham radio license is required for authorised use of the ham HF email network.

You can read about the three classes of ham radio license at this link:

<http://www.wia.org.au/licences/foundation/about/>

Your local ham radio club can be found on the web at this link:

<http://www.wia.org.au/licences/standard/learningorganisers/>