

# The Growing Importance of Using VHF Radio on Inland Waterways

The inland waterways are becoming busier with increased commercial traffic and new pleasure craft. Many new boaters may not be fully familiar with the waterway or with traditional means of communication such as sound signals or flags. Both these factors have produced a situation where marine VHF radio on pleasure craft is becoming an essential piece of equipment leading to an improvement in safety. As a result, most commercial users and now consumers are being advised to use marine VHF radio as a primary safety tool to aid communication and navigation.

A marine VHF radio allows a boatowner to listen to broadcast messages, to call other ship or shore stations or groups of ship stations and to broadcast distress, urgency and safety messages. Gaining an operator's certificate is straightforward and should present no problem to the average inland waterways leisure craft user.

## Why do we need Marine VHF?

It is a matter of safety. Marine VHF radio provides a means to communicate with other vessels and shore stations (e.g. ports, locks, bridges and marinas) on operational, navigation and safety matters.

## It is commonly used

Because radio is now common among commercial vessels on the larger freight waterways, there is a tendency to rely on it as a means of ascertaining the locations of other vessels. If they hear you on the radio, they will know where you are likely to be and can call you to warn of their approach, if necessary.

It is also commonly used on larger waterways, replacing flag signals and to some extent sound signals, without a VHF radio, you may be exposing yourself to unnecessary risks.



## IC-M25 VHF Marine Transceiver



### Safer navigation on Inland Waterway Networks

Marine VHF provides a means for you to call for locks to be prepared or moveable bridges to be swung or raised in advance of your arrival.

### It may be obligatory

Marine VHF radio is obligatory on vessels navigating many tidal waterways, including parts of the Ouse, Humber, Trent, Witham and Thames.

### VHF radio sets are now relatively inexpensive

The ship portable radio licence is free. Users will also need to attend a one-day course, available in all parts of the country, to obtain the required operator's certificate.

### Cruising in company

You will be able to stay in touch with your companion vessel(s) for safety and planning purposes (but not idle chat, which is not allowed on the public channels).

### In an emergency

As well as being able to call the nearest lock keeper, port control or coastguard (depending on where you are), marine VHF also gives you the best chance of attracting help from a nearby vessel. Another vessel may be able to reach you before the emergency services do.

For these reasons, the Inland Waterways Association strongly recommends that all pleasure craft using larger waterways in active use by freight carrying vessels, or any tidal waterway should carry a marine VHF radio and have someone on board who is qualified and able to use it correctly.

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For a more detailed look at the rules and practicalities of using marine VHF please go to the Inland waterways website and download the following document:

#### 'GUIDELINES ON USE OF MARINE-BAND VHF RADIO BY INLAND PLEASURE CRAFT ON UK FREIGHT WATERWAYS'.

Go to link:

[https://www.waterways.org.uk/boating/navigating\\_your\\_boat/vhf/vhf\\_guidance](https://www.waterways.org.uk/boating/navigating_your_boat/vhf/vhf_guidance)

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Image of the Dutch Barge "Itchy Feet" courtesy of our Friends at Seavoice Training ([www.seavoice-training.co.uk](http://www.seavoice-training.co.uk))



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