

X. VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

WHO IS REQUIRED TO INSTALL AND USE A VMS UNIT?²²⁸

Pelagic longline vessels: All vessels with pelagic longline gear onboard.

Bottom longline vessels: All vessels with bottom longline gear onboard off South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia between 33°00'N and 36°30'N from January 1 through July 31.²²⁹

Gillnet vessels: All vessels issued a directed shark limited access permit with gillnet gear onboard from November 15 to April 15.

Vessels owners that are required to use VMS in HMS fisheries may be eligible to receive reimbursement funds (up to \$3,100/unit) for procuring Enhanced Mobile Transmitting Unit (E-MTU) VMS units. The reimbursement does not cover installation or communication costs. For more information, and to see if you are eligible, contact the VMS Support Center at (888) 219-9228.

INSTALLATION, ACTIVATION, AND OPERATION

- The VMS hardware and communications service provider must be on the VMS type approval lists for use in HMS fisheries,²³⁰ which is available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/docs/2013/noaa_fisheries_service_type_01-25-2013.pdf.
- All VMS units must be installed by a qualified marine electrician.²³¹
- As of December 16, 2013, VMS units must always be on, operating, and reporting position data 24 hours and day, 7 days a week, and NMFS Office of Law Enforcement must receive these transmissions every hour without interruption. The only exception to this requirement is that vessel owners and/or operators that will not be fishing for extended periods of time, such as when placing the vessel in drydock for repairs or suspending all fishing activity for the off season, may apply for a documented power-down exemption for their vessel from NMFS Office of Law Enforcement. Vessel owners and/or operators experiencing unanticipated power outages or malfunctions in their VMS units must contact NMFS Office of Law Enforcement to notify them of the situation immediately and must follow the instructions given.²³²
- Prior to leaving port for any trip, a vessel owner or operator must declare their target species and gear type(s) using the VMS terminal. If the vessel is participating in multiple fisheries or switches to a different gear type or target species group, the vessel owner or operator must submit another declaration.²³³
- At least 3 hours, but no more than 12 hours prior to landing, the vessel owner or operator must provide NMFS Office of Law Enforcement advanced notice of landing using the VMS terminal. For trips that are expected to be completed in less than three hours, vessels have the option of making a hail-in declaration at the same time (or before) the hail out declaration (i.e., gear and target species declaration) is made.²³⁴
- As of November 14, 2013, an HMS permitted vessel that will not be targeting or retaining HMS species for 2 or more consecutive fishing trips may “declare out” of the HMS fishery. Vessels that have declared out of the fishery will be exempted from hailing in and out for each trip so long as they continue to participate in non-HMS fisheries that do not also require VMS reporting. If the vessel is participating in a non-HMS fishery that requires VMS reporting, they will still be required to follow the VMS reporting requirements for the non-HMS fishery. HMS vessels that have declared out of the HMS fishery are still required to leave their VMS units on to provide hourly position reports, and are still required to follow all other HMS regulations (e.g., closed areas). Vessels that have declared out of the fishery may still land HMS if they catch them incidentally, but would have to first declare back into the HMS fishery by hailing out and hailing

in at least three hours, and no more than twelve hours, before returning to port.²³⁵

- If the vessel operator is aware that transmission of the reports has been interrupted, the vessel operator must notify NOAA Fisheries and follow the instructions given. If a repair is needed, the vessel owner or operator must have a qualified marine electrician repair or replace the unit before the vessel's next trip.²³⁶