Frequently Asked Questions

Am I covered by this rule?

Yes, you are covered if you own and operate US or foreign vessels in commercial service meeting the applicability provisions in 33 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 164.46. *Generally*, these include:

- vessels on international voyages that are:
  - self-propelled commercial vessels of 65 feet or more in length, other than fishing vessels and small passenger vessels (those certificated to carry 150 or fewer passengers)
  - tankers
  - passenger vessels that are over 150 gross tons
  - vessels, other than passenger vessels and tankers over 300 gross tons
- vessels within Vessel Traffic System (VTS) areas, that are:
  - self-propelled commercial vessels of 65 feet or more in length, other than fishing vessels and small passenger vessels (those certificated to carry 150 or fewer passengers)
  - towing vessels of 26 feet or more in length and more than 600 horsepower
  - passenger vessels, regardless of gross tonnage, certificated to carry more than 150 passengers for hire

I am covered by this rule. When must I install AIS?

If your vessel is covered by SOLAS, you must install AIS within the timeframe set by the International Maritime Organization's SOLAS implementation schedule found in 33 CFR 164.46(a)(2). Otherwise, you must install AIS by December 31, 2004.

Small Entity Compliance Guide

If you have questions on this rule, contact:

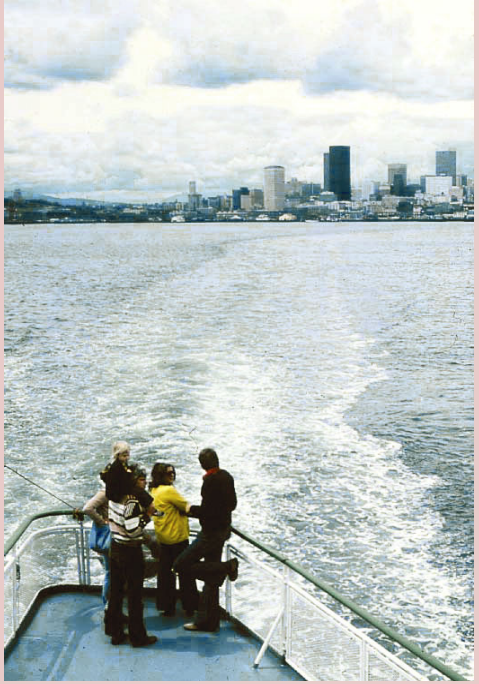
The Maritime Security
Help Desk

Phone: 202.366.9991
Email: uscgregs@comdt.uscg.mil

On the front cover: Photo courtesy of the Washington State Ferries.

Small Entity Compliance Guide

Automatic Identification System Rule



33 CFR Parts 26, 161, 164, 165

United States Coast Guard

The Basics

The Coast Guard has developed rules that require owners and operators of certain vessels to install and use Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). The rules apply to both US-flag and foreign-flag vessels. These regulations are part of **international efforts** to increase the security and the safety of maritime transportation. For international voyages, AIS is required by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

The AIS rule is issued under the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA), as part of a comprehensive regulatory framework for the security of vessels, ports, and facilities located on or adjacent to US waters. AIS will increase security and safety in US ports by providing vessel identity and location information to the Coast Guard and other vessels carrying AIS. Other rules issued under the MTSA cover **port security**, **maritime facilities**, **vessels**, and **certain offshore platforms**.

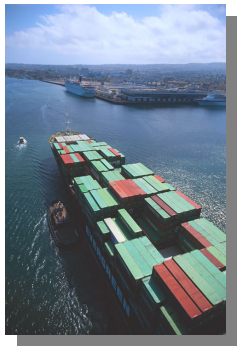
A temporary interim rule on AIS took effect on **July 1, 2003**. A final rule, which takes the place of the temporary interim rule, becomes effective on **November 21, 2003**. This Compliance Guide, issued under the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Act of 1996, provides a plain-language overview of the final rule, **but you should refer to the final rule directly for details**.

How much will AIS cost?

The Coast Guard estimates that the initial cost will be $9,330 per vessel, with continuing costs of $250 per year over an 8-year system life.

Is the Coast Guard considering requiring AIS for domestic voyages outside of VTS areas?

Yes, the Coast Guard is considering expanding the AIS carriage requirements. The Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA) requires that all self-propelled commercial vessels over 65 feet in length install and use AIS in all US waters by December 31, 2004. The Coast Guard is considering comments on this issue until January 5, 2004. See Docket USCG-2003-14878 for those comments. This docket also contains a copy of the "Notice; request for comments," which lists several questions for commenters to address, to aid the Coast Guard as it continues to implement the mandate of the MTSA.



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Are there alternatives to these rules for small businesses?

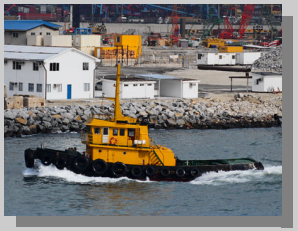
No. At this time, there are no special provisions or alternatives available for small businesses. However, the Coast Guard has requested that suggestions for possible alternatives be submitted to the docket for our "Notice; request for comments" referenced above (USCG-2003-14878).

How will AIS increase security?

AIS will increase security by increasing maritime domain awareness, especially regarding vessels approaching US ports. AIS allows identification and tracking of vessels not available through voice radio communication or radar.

How to Find This Rule

The official Automatic Identification System (AIS) rule appears in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), in parts 26, 161, 164, and 165 of title 33 after November 21, 2003, available through your local library or on the Web at www.gpo.gov/ecfr.



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To view a copy of the AIS rule, you may also visit the docket for the AIS rule at dms.dot.gov. Here you can view the rulemaking record and regulatory analysis. The docket number for this rule is USCG-2003-14757.

For general information on AIS, you may visit the US Coast Guard's Navigation Center website at www.navcen.uscg.gov/enav/ais/default.htm.