

Thuraya MarineStar supports the communication needs of the entire crew

SATCOM TO EMPOWER SMALL VESSELS OPERATING IN THE GULF REGION

With a strong and long standing commitment to providing innovative services onboard vessels, IEC Telecom aims to be a globally trusted satellite partner for all vessel types. For the past several months, IEC Telecom has been focusing on bringing its satellite technology to small boats. Robban Assafina met Nabil Ben Soussia, VP – Maritime, IEC Telecom Group, to find out more.

While the operations of large vessels such as cargo and tankers are heavily regulated by international and regional authorities, visibility over small vessels remains limited. With approximately 50,000 small boats in the Gulf region, the demand for new and innovative communications solutions is undeniable. "Satcom technologies are the key," explains Mr. Ben Soussia.

"The more we, at IEC Telecom, work in marine communications, the more we have realized that connectivity isn't just about having access to clear voice or data services. Connectivity also enables compliance with evolving international regulations and allows a business to gain a competitive advantage. For example, when we talk about a revolutionary product such as Thuraya MarineStar, we're not just delivering flawless voice communications scaled for small boats, we're also talking about capabilities such as geofencing, real-time reporting, and advanced two-way vessel tracking and monitoring," he says.

Satcom technology offers a myriad of benefits for all parties involved. With a fixed terminal on each vessel, crew can report the vessel performance in real-time and receive vessel owner directions around the clock. Reliable connectivity may also enable access to a whole new range of data and increase the efficiency of local governing bodies, including traffic control, maritime safety measures, fishing controls, and more.

"Satcom is still considered a privileged channel of communication, but technology has evolved dramatically in the past 10 years," explains Mr. Ben Soussia. "Satcom solutions like Thuraya MarineStar can support the communication needs of the entire crew that services a vessel, be flexible to the access and cost considerations of individual crew members, and all this for the cost of a single smartphone. Moreover, subscriptions no longer need to be global. We can easily provide local operators with very low regional tariff plans."

Satellite communication technology also empowers crews with new standards of welfare. With millennials joining the workforce, a communication welfare program is a major consideration for talent attraction and retention strategies. According to a recent survey by Futurenautics Research, 73% of crew professionals give high weightage to the level of crew communications services provided onboard when making an



Mr. Nabil Ben Soussia

employment decision. Empowered by IEC Telecom technologies, solutions such as Thuraya MarineStar may serve as a voice gateway for crews out for long periods at sea and even serve akin to a public phone with access provided over scratch cards. The scratch cards allow flexibility for voice access as per the varying needs of each crew member.

Besides offering basic and affordable connectivity onboard small vessels, satcom technology empowers a future where vessel owners can be in sync and communicate in real-time with their crew to gain a competitive advantage, crew members can remain connected at all times and access a new level of welfare and safety, and local authorities can enhance the efficiency and compliance processes at marinas.