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Connectivity demand booms as leisure vessels become safer places to work and rest, reports IEC Telecom

Demand for faster and cheaper connectivity at sea is set to increase as sailing is recognised as a safer place to work, travel and holiday during the Covid-19 pandemic says satcom specialist IEC Telecom, which is experiencing an increase in enquiries from vessel operators in the maritime leisure sector.

With 'lockdowns' and restrictions easing in some parts of the world, yacht owners are now able to enjoy 'social distancing' onboard their vessels, which is leading to a boost in demand for high-speed connectivity and increased bandwidth capacity. With the focus on social distancing, yachts are becoming increasingly attractive remote offices for those able to attend to business matters while enjoying the open sea, sunshine and fresh air. During this challenging time, sailors have an increased need to stay connected for both personal and operational purposes as well as to avoid the need to go ashore as much as possible.

The signs are pointing to an upsurge in leisure boating. Yacht chartering is seen one of the safest ways to enjoy a break at present due to the minimal contact charterers have with other people. Yachts are considered to be more hygienic, given the ratio of crew to guests and the exclusivity of being on a private boat. Affluent consumers are looking for getaways with fewer crowds, more privacy and the ability to gather privately with those closest to them. The Boat Affair platform (whose rentals are available in more than 60 countries) has seen a 23% increase in requests from customers who traditionally would opt for a hotel vacation or a seaside resort but are now seeking a safer alternative. And, according to a new survey by LuggageHero, 25% of travellers report they will try to avoid crowded commercial flights and public transportation in a post-coronavirus world.

Meanwhile, in countries where travel is still restricted, many larger leisure boats and super yachts remain fully crewed and operational – also leading to increased need for connectivity as crews try to stay in touch with family and friends while conducting as many ship operations as possible via remote techniques. With crew restricted to remaining on the vessel in many places, higher speeds and larger bandwidth capacity is needed to provide leisure activities too.

The leisure boat sector was initially hit hard by international lockdowns and is now incurring additional costs for deep cleaning, personal protective equipment, virus testing etc which are not generally reflected in the charter fees. As a result, systems which allow to optimize bandwidth consumption in order to reduce expenses on communication are proving popular with consumers looking to install or upgrade yacht connectivity systems.



Gwenael Loheac, CEO Western & Southern Europe for IEC Telecom said: "Data traffic on leisure vessels has increased during this crisis period because crew, vessel operators and passengers need to exchange information on a more regular basis. In response to Covid-19, we are seeing increased demand for flexible tariffs to enable leisure vessel operators to adapt quickly to fluctuating connectivity requirements. Fortunately, we are well-placed to meet these needs, having a wide portfolio of solutions designed to provide best user experience, while keeping communications costs at bay."

Reacting to the need for enhanced and adaptable connectivity on leisure vessels, IEC Telecom recently launched OneGate Marine Compact – a new lightweight digital solution with a network management system which provides full visibility over on-board network assets (both satellite and GSM) and enables vessel owners to control expenses and optimise consumption via a digital dashboard.

Mr Loheac commented: "OneGate Marine Compact was developed to cater to all major requirements of the leisure boat sector – addressing their needs for speed, bandwidth and cost optimisation. OneGate Marine Compact is an agile, lightweight, highly-adaptable and easy-to-install digital communications system which gives complete access to the benefits of digital connectivity even on smaller vessels. At this challenging time this system is providing many of the answers yacht owners need to enable them to conduct online business and leisure activities safely and securely."

OneGate Marine Compact is compatible with the Iridium Certus® service which provides the only truly global coverage and delivers the fastest L-band speed in the industry. Delivered through Thales VesselINK for the maritime industry, crew members and passengers on Iridium Certus® equipped vessels enjoy faster web surfing and stable use of social media applications even in the harshest weather condition. *Mr Loheac concluded: "Due to its low latency levels, Iridium Certus is the right service for VoIP calls and e-conferencing."*

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IEC Telecom Group

IEC Telecom Group is one of the leading international providers of satellite communications services. Renowned for supplying high quality satcom solutions for more than 25 years, IEC Telecom delivers efficient end-to-end voice and data services when and where it matters most.

We enable digitalization for the maritime industry as well as remote units on land, where GSM coverage is not available.

For urban networks, we provide a powerful satellite back up to ensure the business continuity of customer enterprises.

IEC Telecom has long-standing business relationships with all the key satellite operators. As a strategic partner for Inmarsat, Iridium, Thuraya, and Yahsat,

we're in the unique position to support organisations with global operations as well as offer a wide variety of plans for area-by-area use to regional customers.

IEC Telecom's integrated approach of in-house design and engineering expertise allows us to develop truly unique solutions that enable full control over customer satellite assets.

Our portfolio includes a wide range of satellite products (from handset to VSAT services), solutions, and value-added services. In addition, we offer 24/7 support for satellite-based solutions during their full lifecycle.

IEC Telecom Group has offices across eight countries: Denmark, France, Kazakhstan, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey, and UAE.

For more information, browse our website: www.iec-telecom.com

Media Contacts

Anastasia Kuzmenko

Global Marketing Manager

E: anastasia.kuzmenko@iec-telecom.com

T: +971 (0) 50 222 59 37

Debra Munford

PR Account Manager

E: dmunford@elabor8.co.uk

T: +44(0) 1296 682356