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**CLARIFICATION ON THE USE OF NAVTEX B₃B₄ CHARACTERS =00 AND
NAVTEX SERVICE AREAS**

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-eighth session (12 to 21 May 2004), recognizing the need for guidance on the issues of the incorrect use of B₃B₄ characters =00 and clarification of NAVTEX service areas, approved the annexed Clarification on the use of NAVTEX B₃B₄ characters =00 and clarification of NAVTEX service areas prepared by the Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR) at its eighth session (16 to 20 February 2004).

2 Member Governments are invited to bring this circular to the attention of all Maritime Safety Information (MSI) providers and National Telecommunication Authorities for consideration and action, as appropriate.

ANNEX

CLARIFICATION ON THE USE OF NAVTEX B₃B₄ CHARACTERS =00 AND NAVTEX SERVICE AREAS

The following information is provided for the guidance of Member Governments:

1 Use of NAVTEX characters B₃B₄ = 00

It has been reported that, contrary to the guidelines in the IMO NAVTEX Manual (1994 and 2001 Editions, paragraphs 7.1, 7.4 and 9.1.51), some international NAVTEX stations are sending test messages and weather warnings with NAVTEX B₃B₄ characters = 00, thereby triggering unnecessary alarm functions in the receiver. The principal cause of these “false alarms” appears to be a combination of the incorrect use of B₃B₄ characters = 00 together with an interpretation of the original NAVTEX performance standards by some manufacturers that receipt of B₃B₄ characters = 00 should trigger the alarm. The new performance standards clarify that the appropriate B₂ character (D) should trigger the alarm and not the B₃B₄ characters. However, receivers manufactured to old specifications will be in use for some time to come, and it is therefore important that Administrations use B₃B₄ characters = 00 only for the re-broadcasting of Initial Distress Messages.

2 NAVTEX service areas

Many international NAVTEX stations do not have defined service areas as recommended in annex 4 to resolution A.801(19) – Criteria for use when providing a NAVTEX Service. These should have been established as part of the preliminary discussions between Member States wishing to establish International NAVTEX services and the appropriate NAVAREA Co-ordinator prior to the formal application to establish the service*. Where this is not the case, Administrations are requested to undertake the necessary co-ordination to ensure these requirements are met for both existing and new NAVTEX services.

* IHO/IMO Special Publication No. 53, paragraph 6.2.1.16.