The Maritime Radio License

Those cruising outside of NZ need to have a radio license if you have a HF/MF radio (SSB) on board.

There are two different radio licenses available in NZ :

1. The GURL. The General Users Radio License. This is the most basic marine VHF license. This is the minimum requirement to operate a marine radio and is only valid in NZ. With this qualification you can apply for a marine radio call sign. Although anyone can obtain this qualification ( ie a passport holder from any country) the NZ boat call sign can only be issued to NZ vessels.

2. The MRROC. The Maritime Restricted Radio Operator Certificate. This is the minimum requirement for those travelling offshore in a vessel with a MF/HF SSB radio. This is an international qualification and can be obtained by anyone. (Unlike the amateur radio license where you need to be a resident NZer).

The course requires good familiarization with the Radio Handbook issued by Maritime NZ. The web site for downloading this .pdf file is as follows – ( but easier to Google Maritime Radio Handbook).

<https://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/Publications-and-forms/Commercial-operations/Shipping-safety/Radio-Handbook.pdf>

There are various courses available and when you are ready to be examined look up where examiners are located. This is controlled by Radio Spectrum Management. Their register of approved radio examiners (ARX) is available at <http://www.rsm.govt.nz/licensing/list-of-engineers-examiners/rsm-approved-arx>

There is no order in this list so just look through and find the nearest! Patricia from Gulf Harbour Radio, ARX2141, is listed near the end.

The exam is really the icing on the cake and most examiners will require you to attend a course prior to sitting the exam. This ensures you have the microphone ability to handle an emergency on board, be able to relay information correctly, and be able to participate on nets without causing problems.

A brief outline of the Radio Handbook is as follows. This book used to be freely available by Maritime Radio but sadly is now only available on the net.

It explains the role of Maritime New Zealand who are responsible for Navarea XIV (area 14). This goes from about 160E to 120W and up to the equator. They operate 24/7 and their huge antennas are located near Taupo which explains why offshore they are called Taupo Maritime Radio. They work with all the private radio stations like Gulf Harbour Radio, and are located right next door – through the wall in fact – to the RCC (Rescue Coordination Centre NZ).

Procedures for distress, urgency and safety communications are covered in detail and it is important for these to be known well – not just by the captain but someone else on board who maybe called on to operate the radio in an emergency.

Part of this is knowing the procedural words and phonetic alphabet as often conditions mean that a radio signal from a boat is not well heard. Use of these terms cuts down the number of words you have to use and makes a noisy transmission easier to understand correctly. Learn and use them.

There is a section on how VHF channels are used in NZ and this is followed by some examples of operating procedure. Any course you do will expand on this.

Taupo Maritime NZ also have a schedule of voice broadcasts for warnings and weather. This is included in the handbook and available with other useful data from the [www.yit.co.nz](http://www.yit.co.nz) site (Go to “Library and then [Radio and Fax Weather Resources](https://www.yit.nz/content/radio-and-fax-weather-resources)). When the going gets tough on a passage you may need to know what is ahead weather wise!

If there is interest in running a course that culminates in the MRROC exam I could perhaps do this in Whangarei when cruisers are preparing for the next cruising season. It would likely be held on the same day as the Amateur radio test. Let me know. patricia@ghradio.co.nz