

Automatic identification systems (AISs)

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What is an AIS?

An AIS uses the VHF radio broadcasting system to transfer packets of data over the VHF data link. It enables AIS equipped vessels and shore-based stations to automatically send and receive identification information that can be displayed on an electronic chart, computer display or compatible radar.

Information provided includes the ship's name, call sign and other identifying features, type of vessel; course and speed over the ground; heading and rate of turn for selected vessels.

There are 2 types of AISs – Class A has been mandated by the IMO for SOLAS vessels.

Class B is not mandated by the IMO and has been developed for non-SOLAS commercial and recreational vessels. **Class B AISs are the focus of this information sheet.**

What are the advantages of an AIS?

- Improves the ability of a master to follow other vessels' movements and allows other masters to follow your vessel, particularly at night;
- When used with an appropriate graphical display AIS provides fast, automatic and accurate information about the risk of collision;
- Enables users to identify, and communicate with, targeted vessels; and
- Displays dynamic data such as details of the voyage and draught.

What are the disadvantages of an AIS?

- May cause the master of the vessel to become more focused on the graphical displays rather than on keeping a proper lookout;
- The glow from screen may cause temporary visual impairment at night which may hamper decision making;
- Errors resulting from improper equipment settings may contribute to an incident occurring;
- Does not substitute for the master's responsibility to display good seamanship practices; and
- May not be suitable for open runabouts and similar vessels.

Indicative costs

- Class B AISs are in the order of \$1,500 to \$2,500 per unit plus installation costs of approximately \$500.

What is the regulatory status of this technology?

- Class B AISs are not mandatory for recreational and small commercial vessels being operated on NSW navigable waters.

From where can I obtain further information?

- The Australian Maritime Safety Authority has further information on [AISs](#).