



# VHF DSC: A NEW TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION TO THE RECENT PLB BAN FOR NORTH SEA OFFSHORE WORKERS

Release date: **22<sup>nd</sup> Apr 2009**

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

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Mobilarm, one of the worlds leading marine safety specialists, represented by the newly formed Saltire Technologies in Scotland, has stated that its new Mobilarm V100 device is the solution to recent calls for the replacement of PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) technology to ensure the safety of offshore workers.

Demands for a replacement technology follow the effective banning of PLBs aboard oil and gas transport helicopters in the North Sea. After the ditching of an offshore helicopter in February 2009, the UK Air Accident Investigation Board (AAIB) discovered that PLBs could cause long range rescue beacons on helicopters and life rafts to stop working. This could have a devastating impact on a rescue operation. The subsequent fatal helicopter crash on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 led to the calls for new technology to be swiftly developed.

“The circumstances in which the PLB withdrawal has come about are understandably tragic, but we must now concentrate on getting a replacement technology in the hands of offshore workers as fast as possible to ensure their continued safety aboard helicopters, should their be an accident, and on offshore platforms should there be a Man Overboard incident” comments Lindsay Lyon, CEO, Mobilarm. “The V100 is a new, but fully developed technology that provides alerting and locating during an incident, but works on the marine VHF frequency, therefore does not affect any other emergency beacons or require any new land, platform or vessel based infrastructure.”

The Mobilarm V100 is a fully automated, position indicating radio beacon that transmits a distress call via VHF DSC and VHF voice to all VHF radio equipped vessels or SAR organisations within range should an incident occur. The pocket-sized V100 is attached to clothing or lifejackets and will automatically activate if the wearer is in the water, sending out a distress call and real time GPS coordinates of the casualty's current position. The V100 may also be activated manually, but is designed to be very secure against accidental activation.

"We have been working towards the full availability of the V100 in the UK for some months now, but with the recent withdrawal of PLBs it is now more important than ever that this new technology is available to our offshore workforce," comments Ken Higgins, Head of Saltire Technologies, the main Scottish agent for Mobilarm. "The V100 product, operation and benefits are proven, making it more than just a replacement, but an improvement on existing PLB technology. It is essentially ready to go, making it a very attractive solution over the proposed redevelopment of PLBs."

Mobilarm is currently working with the MCA to gain official acceptance of the device and will start shipping to the UK as soon as this is achieved. For more information regarding the Mobilarm V100 technology and its operation, see the attached white paper/reviewers guide.

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**Notes for editors:**

Based in Perth, Australia, Mobilarm is the world leader in electronic marine safety products that protect and save lives in man overboard emergencies for commercial and offshore mariners. Available online and through a global network of dealers and distributors, Mobilarm's award-winning products are specifically designed to improve the workplace safety environment for all mariners, by providing an instant alert to vessel and crew in the event of man overboard.

The company's Australian and International awards include the Australian Design Award and the winner of the Seatrade Safety at Sea Award, the first such award given to an Australian company.