



Implementing VMS in Victorian Commercial Fisheries

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) is proposing as part of its review of the Fisheries Regulations that certain fisheries will require a vessel monitoring system (VMS) to be installed on vessels operating under a licence. VMS is best practice in fisheries compliance and is used in many Australian and international fisheries. Victorian fishers who hold Commonwealth fishing concessions will already be familiar with VMS and have it installed on their vessel. The VFA is committed to working with industry to transition to VMS and to focus on educating fishers rather than on enforcement.

What is VMS?

Vessel monitoring systems (VMS) use small onboard transceivers to regularly log a vessel's position and upload this information to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) servers. This information will be accessible to VFA officers who can view it on computers and portable devices such as iPads. Fishers will also be able to view their own real-time and historical data on computers, tablets and smartphones, download this information and view the current status of their VMS device including confirming that it is operating correctly.

The VFA will use AFMA's VMS platform to host its system.

Benefits of VMS

Benefits to the VFA

- Less time spent searching for fishers will make surveillance and inspections more efficient and effective and free up resources to focus on other fishing pressures including illegal fishing.
- Help validate logbook data on where and when fishing occurred.
- Provide intelligence and evidence for investigations.

Benefits to industry

- Prior reporting will not be required in fisheries using VMS.
- The overall number of at-sea inspections will be reduced.
- Fewer inspections will reduce the impact on compliant commercial fishers.
- Support finer scale fisheries management including fish downs.
- Support community confidence in commercial fisheries through best practice and the knowledge that fishers are not operating in closed areas such as marine parks.

What fisheries will require VMS and when will it be implemented?

The VFA is proposing that VMS be required in new fisheries, those that harvest priority species, are of high value, are quota-managed, operate in areas where there may be conflict between stakeholders, have a high reliance on CPUE in stock assessments or already have VMS.

The VFA is committed to working with industry to ensure that operational safeguards and policies are in place before implementing VMS. The following expected implementation dates are, therefore, subject to change if necessary.

Fishery	Expected implementation
Abalone	1 April 2020
Rock lobster	1 July 2020
Giant crab	1 July 2020
Ocean and dive scallop (already have VMS)	1 February 2020
Inshore trawl	1 July 2020
Western Port/ Port Phillip Bay	1 July 2020
Corner Inlet	1 July 2020
Sea urchin	1 July 2020
Octopus (new fishery)	TBA
Banded morwong (new fishery)	TBA



VMS costs

The cost of VMS has two parts:

- One-off cost of about \$1,100 to purchase, install and activate VMS equipment; and
- Annual airtime and management charges.

The VFA will pay for the VMS equipment and activation and will, in addition, reimburse fishers up to \$250 of their installation costs.

Ongoing airtime and management charges will be up to about \$625 per year and will be paid through licence fees. The VFA is working with airtime providers to reduce this cost based on actual use and volume discounts.

When will my VMS have to be turned on?

VMS units will have to be turned on from the time the vessel departs port on a commercial fishing trip until it returns to port. VMS units do not have to be turned on if the vessel is not commercially fishing such as when it is travelling to a slipway or refuelling.

What if my VMS stops working?

Fishers will know that their VMS unit is operating by checking their computer or smartphone/tablet app or, if available, an external light on the device. The VFA acknowledges that VMS units will occasionally malfunction through no fault of the fisherman and will work with industry to ensure that fishers are not prevented from going to sea if this occurs.

The VFA will work with industry to develop a manual reporting procedure so that fishers can request permission to fish if their VMS unit fails. Manual reporting will be approved for a set period of time during which the fisher will report their position regularly by email or SMS to the VFA while their VMS unit is being replaced or repaired. If a VMS unit fails while on a fishing trip, the VFA will attempt to contact the fisher and fix the problem.

Not all requests to manually report will, however, be approved. Requests will be considered on agreed principles but may be refused where, for example, the fisher will be operating in a high-risk area or has a history of their VMS failing excessively.

Data security and privacy

The VFA takes fishers' privacy and data security very seriously and ensures that there are strong legal protections in place to prevent unauthorised access to or divulging of this information.

The *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* protects the privacy of your personal information when it is handled by Victorian public sector organisations, including the VFA.

The *Fisheries Act 1995* prohibits any current or past VFA employee from divulging or obtaining a pecuniary or other advantage from any information relating to another person's personal affairs that was obtained during their employment.

AFMA follows and implements measures to counter cyber security threats as directed by the Australian Cyber Security Centre, a division of the Australian Signals Directorate, and has regular independent security audits to ensure its cyber security stays strong and up to date.

All VMS data will be stored in Australia at a facility which meets strict Commonwealth government standards.

Case study: The Rock Lobster Fishery

Vessels fishing under a Rock Lobster Fishery access licence will be required to have an operating VMS from 1 February 2020. Rock lobster fishers operate in remote offshore areas and are required to prior and post report landing and to report the removal of catch from cofts and wet wells.

The VFA will temporarily exempt these fishers from the requirement to have VMS and begin working with the Victorian Rock Lobster Association and Seafood Industry Victoria to develop an approach to implementing VMS that focuses on education so that fishers understand the new system and how it works.

The VFA will purchase and activate VMS units on behalf of rock lobster fishers and reimburse each fisher up to \$250 of the installation cost. Fishers will own these units and be responsible for their ongoing maintenance and replacement. The cost of operating each unit will be paid through licence fees.

Rock lobster fishers will no longer be required to prior report their intention to land catch once the VMS requirement is implemented.

The VFA is committed to working with industry to ensure that all necessary operational safeguards and policies are in place before implementing VMS and will put a strong focus on educating fishers rather than on enforcement.

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