The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) is currently conducting marine safety investigations into two different collisions involving vessels that had one or both of its radars in standby mode. In one case, the collision occurred during the day at sea while the other occurred at night in an area of high vessel traffic. In both cases, the radars kept in standby mode were reported as being fully functional.

International Regulations for Prevention of Collisions at Sea (COLREG), Rule 7 requires that:

- every vessel shall use all available means appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions to determine if the risk of collision exists; and
- proper use shall be made of radar equipment if fitted and operational.

The Administrator urges shipowners and operators to ensure that Masters and Officers in charge of a navigational watch are familiar with the requirements of COLREG, Rule 7; and use radars and radar plotting equipment (e.g., ARPA) as required by the COLREG to provide early warning of collision risks.

Vessels with a non-operational radar that are currently at sea or in a port where it is not possible to repair the radar prior to departure, should request a Dispensation Letter from the Administrator per RMI Marine Notice 2-011-26, Application for Service Extensions / Dispensations.

In addition, vessels with non-operational radar are reminded that there may be port State reporting requirements with which they need to comply. For example, vessels calling at ports in the United States (US) are required to notify the relevant US Coast Guard Captain of the Port and request an inbound Letter of Deviation prior to the vessel’s inbound transit.