



# The 4-step guide: How to choose a Ship Security Alert System

You need a Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) that you can rely on when it is needed most. But with so many options (integrated or dedicated? Premium or low cost? Inmarsat-C or IsatData Pro?), how do you figure out which is the right option for you?

Here are 4 key considerations to help you make the right choice

- 1 Meeting regulations vs. exceeding regulations
- 2 Integrated vs. dedicated
- 3 Time vs. cost
- 4 Alert activation points

Read our 4-step guide to choosing the very best Ship Security Alert System

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## Meeting regulations vs. exceeding regulations

### Meeting regulations

According to research by Gray Page, Ship Security Alert Systems that conform to only the minimum standards set out in SOLAS Regulation XI-2/6 undermine the practical value of a SSAS when ships are under threat and “are failing at the time they are needed most”.

However, while some SSASs satisfy only the minimum regulatory requirements (through integration with existing GMDSS systems), others are designed to exceed the regulation.

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## Exceeding regulations

But how can you tell if a SSAS meets or exceeds the regulations? A really good indicator is how many Class Societies it has been Type Approved by. If it has been Type Approved by many of the leading Societies, this indicates that the SSAS is fully compliant, well manufactured and (importantly) well tested. Other good indicators include the warranty period and terms offered with the device.

## Spotlight: Type Approvals

The DSAS Mk2 is IACS certified by most major classification societies, with all tests meeting or exceeding the requirements of the guidelines laid out in IACS Unified Requirement E10 and the relevant sections of IEC945.

- ☑ **ABS** – American Bureau of Shipping
- ☑ **BSH** – Bundesamt Für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie
- ☑ **BV** – Bureau Veritas
- ☑ **CCS** – China Classification Society
- ☑ **DNV** – Det Norsk Veritas
- ☑ **GL** – Germanischer Lloyd
- ☑ **KR** – Korean Register of Shipping
- ☑ **LR** – Lloyds Register of Shipping
- ☑ **NKK** – Nippon Kaiji Kyokai
- ☑ **PRS** – Polski Rejestr Statków

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## Integrated vs. dedicated

You might be wondering what the difference between an integrated and a dedicated Ship Security Alert System is and whether you would really notice a difference in your day to day operations. You might be surprised to learn that the differences are actually significant. Read on to learn more.

### Integrated

The main drawback of an integrated SSAS is that if, for whatever reason, a ship's communications system goes offline, or is actively taken down, the integrated SSAS will cease to function.

### Dedicated

In contrast, because dedicated SSASs are standalone devices, they operate independently of the ship's existing radio and satellite communication systems. This means that if the ship's power goes down, you can rest easy that the SSAS will still be functional.

Moreover, some dedicated SSASs (such as Pole Star's DSAS Mk2) are designed to be inconspicuous (the D stands for 'discreet'). Because it does not resemble typical satellite communications equipment, it is less likely to attract the attention of anyone unlawfully boarding or taking control of the vessel.

In addition to this, many dedicated SSASs incorporate a battery-powered backup that is operationally independent of any other systems. In the case of Pole Star's DSAS Mk2, the internal backup battery can power the device for several days in the event of power failure.

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## Time vs. cost

Cost is an important consideration in any buying decision, especially in the difficult economic conditions currently facing the maritime industry. However, most of us have learned (the hard way) that when the price seems too good to be true, it usually is, but good quality pays for itself.

### Financial costs

There are a number of Ship Security Alert Systems available on the market at various different price points. To help you make the right choice, we've split the options into three categories:

✓✓✓ **Economy:** The lowest cost way to comply with the SOLAS regulations is to utilise an existing SSAS-compatible Inmarsat-C unit. However, as we've highlighted earlier in this article, there are significant drawbacks to "integrated" solutions in the event that power aboard the ship goes down.

✓✓✓ **Mid-range:** Compliant with minimum standards set out in SOLAS Regulation XI-2/6, these mid-range dedicated SSASs will likely be type approved by just one Class Society and will offer some of the benefits of a premium dedicated SSAS such as battery back-up. They will not offer as many cutting edge features as the premium brands, and typically they can only be tracked after a security alert has been triggered.

✓✓✓ **Premium:** This includes devices like the Pole Star DSAS Mk2 which have been engineered and tested to the highest standards (and will have Type Approvals from many different Class Societies to prove it). Unlike the economy and mid-range options, premium SSASs allow shipowners to track ships continuously (and will often include a certain number of position reports per day for free) and communicate with them remotely from ashore. They will also have extra features and protections such as anti-tamper alarms and battery protection technology. Performance and lifespan should be excellent, and the device will be covered by a generous warranty.

### Working-time costs

Although dedicated SSASs are generally more expensive, these systems often include a wide range of valuable features that offset that extra investment. For example, Pole Star's DSAS Mk2 includes features that reduce the working-time burden on ships' Masters and crews as well as offering continuous hourly reporting (24 position reports per day) as standard.

Some beneficial features to look for in particular include:

-  **Continuous position reporting:** Allowing you to track a ship continually, not just after an alert is raised.
-  **Frequency of position reports:** How many position reports are included, if any? Many SSAS suppliers offer only one position per day. If you will need more position reports, look into how much extra this will cost. Typically the "low cost" integrated Inmarsat-C SSAS

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have the highest prices per position report. In contrast, dedicated SSASs are typically based on an IsatData Pro transceiver which will result in a much lower price per position.

-  **Anti-tamper alerts:** An excellent feature that will alert you should the SSAS be tampered with.
-  **Monthly health check:** Another helpful feature that checks the health of the device and gives warning about potential maintenance requirements.
-  **Battery protection:** Battery protection technology detects overcharging and protects the battery, increasing the lifespan of the device.
-  **Latest IsatData Pro technology:** SSASs that use the latest satellite communications technology will ensure high-reliability and long life. IsatData Pro transceivers are higher bandwidth than Inmarsat-C, which means more data can be delivered to you for a lower cost.
-  **Simple diagnostics:** Some SSASs offer easy to understand diagnostic LEDs that indicate the system's status for easy maintenance.

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## Alert activation points

Alert activation points are often installed inside cupboards and other concealed locations in order to prevent accidental activation. This, however, makes it difficult to activate the SSAS in the event of an alert.

Fortunately, there are SSASs on the market that can resolve this difficulty by using activation points with a hinged lid. This type of button is inherently protected from inadvertent activation, so it can be installed in locations that are easily accessible.



The DSAS Mk2 is a premium, standalone, IsatData Pro SSAS solution that exceeds SOLAS requirements. Designed for the user who requires a SSAS they can rely on when it is needed most. Features 5-7 day battery backup, 2 alert buttons and hourly reporting.

To find out how the Pole Star Platform can make your job easier, save you time and help you achieve your business objectives, register for a free trial without obligation, at: [www.polestarglobal.com/trial](http://www.polestarglobal.com/trial)

**Full disclosure:** Pole Star is a leading provider of ship security alert systems and maritime fleet monitoring solutions.

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