

# CASE STUDY

## SF2500 keeps charter yacht on track and in touch off UAE coastline

Thuraya's new maritime solution for small- and medium-sized vessels combines voice, GPS tracking and SMS alerts in a compact, affordable package.



The coastline of the United Arab Emirates is a magnet for tourists and local people seeking beauty and solitude away from the heat and bustle of land. Each day, leisure vessels ply the Gulf on fishing trips, cruises and outings to Dubai Creek, Sir Bani Yas Island and other popular locations. These trips are a thriving business for a company such as Marine Concept, which runs a sea school in Dubai for trainee mariners and hires out crewed luxury motor yachts for charter voyages.

When a group charts a yacht, Marine Concept always tries to make sure everyone has a great time and can relax and enjoy the excursion. However, for this to happen the crew and support team on shore have to be on their toes at all times. General Manager Christian Kaden said: "We pride ourselves on our professional approach. Even for a short charter of an hour or so, the safety and comfort of our passengers is paramount."



# Making marine communications an affordable luxury

Being able to connect with somebody in an emergency is a capability that all vessels should have. SF2500 brings this closer to reality.

*"It was a straightforward job because SF2500 is very easy to fit. On this occasion we didn't need to drill any new holes for cables. We were able to use an existing cable run by moving an unused panel."*

*Clarence Hendricks of Xtra-Link*

## Summary of SF2500 on the Pearl

### Network

- Thuraya voice channel
- SMS text messaging
- Calling line identification

### Hardware

- Omni-directional active antenna (210mmx180mm)
- Base unit (205mm x190mmx80mm)

### Safety and security features

- Pre-set SMS alerts
- Programmable Tracking
- Geo-fencing

## Unreliable radio and GSM coverage

Communications play a central role during any charter. The skipper must report his GPS location regularly and has to radio the shore office to request permission if, for example, a customer wants to extend his charter or take the yacht to an unplanned location. He also needs regular shipping and weather updates and must call immediately to request assistance in the unlikely event of a problem.

Vessels in the Gulf often cruise outside radio and mobile phone coverage. Although one or both can usually be recovered by moving a few miles, Marine Concept are aware of the safety implications of having no radio or phone contact in an emergency. Their skippers don't want to be out of contact with shore for too long, so occasionally they have to move their vessels away from a coverage black spot before their passengers want to leave. The company has been looking for an appropriate, affordable solution to this problem for some time.

## SF2500 guarantees 24/7 communication

In June 2012, Marine Concept turned to the Thuraya satellite network to solve the problem of uncertain terrestrial communications in the Gulf. The Pearl – a 16 metre Sunseeker Manhattan 50 motor yacht – was fitted with a Thuraya



SF2500 terminal by Dubai-based service provider Xtra-Link.

The SF2500 terminal is the ideal mobile satellite solution for small- and medium-sized vessels, combining affordable voice, SMS and GPS tracking. The discreet, compact antenna has been designed by manufacturer Addvalue to fit neatly above deck alongside existing radar, TV and radio equipment, while the base unit can be conveniently wall mounted in the wheelhouse or elsewhere below deck.

According to Clarence Hendricks of Xtra-Link, installation on the Pearl only took a few hours: "It was a straightforward job because SF2500 is very easy to fit. On this occasion we didn't need to drill any new holes for cables. We were able to use an existing cable run by moving an unused panel."

# Superior performance in harsh environments

Tough times call for tough talk and Thuraya's network, Addvalue's hardware and SF2500 services live up to this challenge.

*"The GPS tracking feature of SF2500 is a real benefit, because it allows us to automate the job of monitoring the Pearl as she moves up and down the UAE coastline. The skipper doesn't have to report his position so frequently because the system does it for him, so he can concentrate on navigating and making sure the passengers have a good time. It's also an important security feature, because the shore office will know immediately if the vessel is taken out of the pre-set geo-fence areas."*

Tarek Hassan Ramadan

## About Xtra-Link

- A Dubai-based private company
- Offices in UAE, Netherlands and Venezuela
- Provides cutting edge satellite and radio communication solutions that make the difference.

## Clear voice calls from anywhere, to anywhere

The crew of the Pearl quickly learned everything they needed to know about operating the SF2500 terminal. The base unit is simple to use and has a clear menu that is easy to navigate, and the system comes with a comprehensive, well-written manual.

Skipper Jacob Kiyuba began making test calls from SF2500 immediately after installation: "I called our local office and also my family in Uganda. In both cases the line was very clear, just like a landline phone. There's no problem using SF2500 – you just pick up the handset and dial. It is really reliable and we get a clear reception over the satellite wherever we cruise."

With the SF2500 terminal on board, the Pearl now has a voice link to shore even when radio or GSM networks are unavailable. According to Senior Skipper Tarek Hassan Ramadan, this is the most important feature of the phone. "We now have guaranteed communication wherever the boat goes along the coastline of UAE. This would be vital in an emergency, but also for example if the weather changed suddenly. I could call to tell my office I was heading back or was entering the closest marina to my location. This is something that not all vessels have."



## GPS tracking enhances safety and security

SF2500's built-in GPS tracking facility is a versatile vessel-management tool for Marine Concept because it enables the shore office to get location updates from the Pearl at any time over the Thuraya network. The base unit can be configured to send automatic position reports via SMS, and to be polled for an on-demand position. In this way, the company can know the Pearl's exact position at any time.

GPS geo-fencing is also supported by SF2500. This feature allows Marine Concept to enter the coordinates of up to five geographical areas (circular or rectangular) into the base unit's memory. The SF2500 terminal will automatically send a time-stamped alert when the vessel enters or leaves one of these areas. Geo-fencing is a significant safety feature, immediately



# Stay in command at sea

Having a reliable voice, SMS, tracking and alerting device on board makes sense when managing an asset worth several million dollars.

alerting the company if the vessel is taken outside its permitted area of operation, and an aid to voyage management.



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Another safety feature is the alert button on the base unit, which can be pre-configured to text an SOS via the Thuraya satellite. When the button is activated, the system immediately sends the message to up to three pre-set contacts to alert them of an emergency. The SMS texts are time-stamped and include the vessel's GPS coordinates.

## An asset for passenger marketing

Although SF2500 has primarily been installed on the Pearl for operational use by the skipper, it is a potential selling point for passengers. Some may wish to use it when they are cruising out of GSM coverage for business calls or to keep in touch with families and friends. Marine Concept are looking at ways of marketing the service to customers and of charging them for making calls and sending texts over the Thuraya network.

With its beautiful scenery and wonderful weather, the coastline of the UAE is now firmly established as one of the world's most popular locations for charter cruising. Marine Concept has stolen a march on its competitors by adopting the SF2500 terminal from Thuraya to guarantee communications with shore and improve the efficiency of vessel tracking and management on the Pearl. Where Marine Concept leads, others will surely follow as SF2500's reputation for reliability and affordability spreads rapidly.