

# satellite communications offer double advantage

Savings of up to 80 per cent on a ship's typical satellite communication bill are possible when a TracPhone V7 and mini-VSAT broadband airtime plan is supplemented with an L-band system and FleetBroadband airtime, says **Jens Geger Andreasen\***

**K**VH introduced its TracPhone V7 and, in conjunction with ViaSat, the regional Ku-band mini-VSAT broadband service in July 2007. A recent service expansion brought mini-VSAT broadband coverage to the waters of the northern Pacific, stretching from Asia to the west coast of the US and from Hawaii north to Alaska, so that the coverage area now encompasses nearly two thirds of the world's most vital shipping lanes.

This is good news for commercial mariners, and the advantages can be extended if L-band services, such as Inmarsat's FleetBroadband, are adopted. Since the hardware for both solutions is compact and easy to install, having both antennas on board actually takes up less space, and could be more affordable and more reliable than a traditional 1m VSAT antenna!

The cost savings of using this paired satellite communications solution do not end after installation, where there is no need for deck strengthening or heavy-lift cranes. Monthly airtime costs can also be carefully tended to, thanks to optional least cost routing that automatically shifts from one system and service to the other, based on availability and lower service costs.

Since mini-VSAT broadband offers the option of fixed-price, unlimited monthly airtime plans, and FleetBroadband airtime is charged by the megabyte, it is straightforward and cost efficient. Both services offer airtime plans based on data speeds, so complementary rate plans will ensure a seamless experience when using either service, as well as an overall solution that meets a ship's budget.

Reliable and affordable satellite communications are crucial to nearly every operation on a tanker. These range from remote monitoring and maintenance via streaming video, to sending and receiving reports via e-mail, to determining optimal routes and vessel speed to meet lay dates – to say nothing of real-time telemedicine should a crew member fall ill.



*The new KVH service is available from any location on board Primula*

Vadero Ship Management of Sweden chose the TracPhone V7 for the oil and chemical product tanker *Primula*. The system was easily integrated with other onboard systems, including Inmarsat-C, mini-M, and GSM. A key accomplishment in this arrangement is that telephone service is now available in remote areas of the ship. "The IP phone is a DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications) with a slave sender in two positions in the ship's staircase," says Eddie Kristensson, personnel/purchase manager for Vadero. "This makes it possible for the master to stay permanently in contact, even if walking around in the superstructure. It does not matter if he is on the bridge, in the mess room, or even in the engine control room. This gives us a very flexible system that can also be used by the chief engineer to obtain technical assistance via telephone from the control room, where no GSM phone will ever work."



The compact 24in KVH TracPhone V7 antenna offers VoIP and Internet

The mini-VSAT broadband service, along with the KVH TracPhoneV7 antenna, comprises what is believed to be the first end-to-end 60cm VSAT hardware, service and support package available for maritime communications, and offers VoIP telephone service and Internet access. Use of ultra-efficient spread-spectrum technology means users have access to data speeds as fast as 512 kbps (upload) and 2 Mbps (download) at fixed monthly rates.

FleetBroadband is available via two terminals: the FB250 and FB500. The FB500 enables access to standard IP speeds of up to 432 kbps (contended) and a choice of streaming IP (guaranteed) of 32, 64, 128, and 256 kbps while the FB250 offers standard IP speeds up to 280 kbps and streaming IP at 32, 62, and 128 kbps.

Currently, mini-VSAT broadband service covers roughly two thirds of the world's major shipping lanes, while Inmarsat's FleetBroadband covers nearly 95 per cent of the same. Expanding mini-VSAT broadband service in south east Asian waters is among KVH and ViaSat's highest priorities for the network, and Asian coverage is expected to expand significantly in the first half of 2009.

Plans are in place for 100 per cent global coverage from each service. Completion of the global rollout of mini-VSAT broadband is expected within 2009 – Inmarsat expects to complete global FleetBroadband coverage in April. **TST**

*\*Jens Geger Andreasen is the marketing coordinator for KVH Europe A/S*