News Release

New Free App Combines AIS, Augmented Reality, Digital Charts, Social Networking, and More

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Smartphone App Charts New Waters in Maritime Safety

Brunswick, Maine— At last, recreational boaters can realize the safety benefits of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) that identifies large vessels without having to buy an expensive receiver or transmitter. In fact, thanks to a just-released smartphone app called Smart Chart AIS, the service is free.

Not only does the Smart Chart AIS app enable users to view AIS Class A & B traffic, it also introduces a new cellular-based AIS capability, called AIS Class E, which is tailored for smaller, recreational craft. In addition to identifying vessels, AIS provides information on their type, size, speed, and heading.

According to Chuck Benton, founder of Technology Systems, Inc., which created the app, "The free Smart Chart AIS app is also the only one available that includes an Augmented Reality feature allowing boaters to 'see' in fog, darkness, and other low-visibility situations."

Employing satellite positioning and orientation data, the app displays on the device's screen the locations of buoys and channel markers, overlaying the navigational information on the view as seen through the camera. All of this information, plus Next Generation Radar (NEXRAD) live weather overlays, can be superimposed on the free National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) electronic charts also included in the app.

The app's Augmented Reality capability, combined with cruising information provided by the interactive, on-line cruising guide ActiveCaptain, also allows users to view the location of such points of interest as recommended anchorages, docks, restaurants, and marinas—and to see each marina's current fuel and dockage prices, as well as reviews of their services.

Recreational boaters will also enjoy the ways that Smart Chart AIS enhances social networking on the water. Using the app, it's easy to chat boat-to-boat with friends, send photos, share waypoints, arrange where to rendezvous, and find friends in a large or crowded harbor. This chat capability also allows communication with strangers on nearby boats, sending them a snapshot of their vessel or providing local knowledge of possible hazards.

Smart Chart AIS offers a spectrum of safety features. With its Instant Positioning capability, users can transmit their location immediately in the event of an emergency. Smart Chart also stands ready to play a prominent safety role in the event of such emergencies as dangerous weather events, an oil spill, or law enforcement response action. In such instances, authorities can quickly indicate on the app's charts areas to be avoided or evacuation routes. The app also clearly identifies all participating vessels in an endangered area.

Smart Chart AIS is provided free of charge to enhance the safety and security of the country's waterways. The Smart Chart AIS concept was developed in response to the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate's request for ways to improve waterway safety and security. TSI's director Chuck Benton—a longtime sailor himself—says he looked at the boating community and realized that most boaters own smartphones, and that these could be used to provide tracking similar to AIS.

"From this initial idea the Smart Chart AIS concept was developed, wherein users get lots of valuable resources free of charge, in exchange for participating in this new form of AIS," says Benton. He adds that TSI's intent is to eventually place the Smart Chart AIS protocols in the public domain, and to enable all boaters and other maritime interests to be better informed about what's around them, thereby enhancing safety for all. Smart Chart AIS's development has been supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate under the Small Business Innovation Research Program, Contract #D12PC00364.

Smart Chart AIS has just been released for Android smartphones and can be downloaded without charge from the Google Play Store. The app will be available for iPhones, iPads, and other tablets in the coming months.

Technology Systems, Inc. (TSI), the developer of the Smart Chart AIS app, is a small, privately held technology firm based in Brunswick, Maine. The company has a solid, three-decades-long track record in the development of groundbreaking software employing Navigation, Augmented Reality, Command and Control, Voice over IP, and other innovative technologies. For more information on Smart Chart AIS, visit www.smartchartais.com. For information regarding TSI, visit www.tsinc.com.