



£220

NASA Marine AIS



£650

Icom MA-500TR



£510

Comar CSD 300



£840

Simrad A150

# AIS with screens

In this sector, Nasa Marine did much to bring AIS to the attention of the sailing public with the launch of their 'AIS Radar' receiver unit in 2004. It's still going strong and is still the cheapest way to get AIS with a dedicated display – chandlery prices start from around £220. It works by showing a target-style plot with trails behind vessels within range. As it is showing relative motion, with your own boat at the centre of the screen, any trails that line up with the centre of the target pose a potential threat.

It has its drawbacks, notably a single-channel receiver which is noticeably slower to acquire targets than its dual-channel competitors and a lack of an NMEA output to allow you to use its data elsewhere, but its low price and low current draw (less than 250mA) can make it a good option for small boats.

Staying with receive-only units, Vesper Marine offer a dual-channel receiver with their WatchMate 750 (£406) and a display unit which can display AIS data from a separate receiver. This unit, branded WatchMate 670 (£219), offers an interesting compromise for the

offshore sailor mentioned earlier – by adding this to your network you can display AIS data either on your plotter or via a standalone screen when required – complete with a compellingly low current draw of 100mA. Both units offer a target-style plot, CPA (closest point of approach) calculation, an anchor watch facility and the ability to interface with your VHF to initiate a ship-to-ship DSC call for a selected target.

## Send and receive

In the transponder market, Vesper are equally active, offering a choice of two units with screens: the black and white, low-power WatchMate 850 (£767), similar to their receive-only models, and the colour, touch screen WatchMate Vision (£1,068), complete with WiFi and an app to interface with your iPhone. The

display niche with their CSD 300 unit (£510), which adds a background chart and the ability to display C-Map charts to a unit optimised to display AIS targets from a separate receiver.

Icom manufacture the MA-500TR (from £650), a transponder designed to interface with their range of fixed VHF units and allow easy initiation of DSC calls.

On our last test we found this unit was one of the easiest to use, while its square, monochrome screen worked well in low light and showed a clear, target-style plot of AIS contacts.

## Colour display

If you prefer a transponder with a colour display, two options are available in addition to the Vesper WatchMate Vision mentioned earlier: the Simrad A150 (from £840) and the Amec Camino-201 (£798). The Amec has the larger screen and is consequently a larger unit,

so the choice depends on an extent on available space. Both have a built-in basemap allowing targets to be shown in their true positions, and both have button-driven interfaces which work well once you become used to them.



£1,068

Vesper WatchMate Vision