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Blue Ocean maritime deal sets sail

By Emmet Ryan

Irish maritime communications firm Blue Ocean Wireless has signed a deal to provide on-board mobile telecommunications with a major global provider.

The deal with Stratos Global will see the firm provide Inmarsat satellite services to maritime customers. Stratos claims to be the leading Inmarsat provider to the global shipping industry.

"We are delighted to announce partnership arrangements with Stratos, an established provider of global communications solutions to the merchant maritime sector," said Robert Johnson, chief executive of Blue Ocean.

The agreement follows successful trials of the Blue Ocean offering on board two container vessels conducted in late 2006 by Blue Ocean, Stratos and Inmarsat.

The three organisations will, along with an unnamed GSM network operator, provide a dedicated global GSM service for crew members of merchant ships. Under the partnership arrangement, Stratos will host Blue Ocean equipment at each of its Land Earth Stations (LES) around the world and provide terrestrial connectivity to GSM operators for Blue Ocean through its StratosNexus network.

Blue Ocean's service will enable seafarers to use their existing mobile phones on board vessels in deep ocean water in the same way that they would do in port or on land. The service will also enable ship owners, insurers and government authorities, as well as suppliers and customers, to track and monitor individual containers on board merchant vessels as they traverse the globe using a combination of GPRS and RFID technology.

"We are excited to be partnering with Blue Ocean Wireless in delivering GSM solutions to the maritime sector," said Jim Parm, Stratos president and chief executive. "Stratos, in providing Inmarsat-based services to Blue Ocean Wireless, is further extending its commitment to delivering crew welfare solutions to the maritime community."

Blue Ocean Wireless is based in Ballsbridge in Dublin and is a joint venture between private investment firm Claret Capital and Irish technology communications company Altobridge.