

# EMERGENCY AND ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

## Radio and EPIRB Procedures/Marine Emergency Distress

**A. If you are in distress** (i.e., threatened by grave and imminent danger) or observe another vessel in distress, transmit the International Distress Call on Channel 16: “MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY — THIS IS \_\_\_\_\_.”

State the call sign of the vessel in distress—or the name of your boat if no call sign has been assigned—and repeat it three times. **SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLEARLY.**

### If you are aboard the vessel in trouble, state:

1. **WHO** you are (your vessel’s call letters and name).
2. **WHERE** you are (give your vessel’s position in latitude/longitude or true bearing and distance in nautical miles from a widely known geographical point).  
Remember that local names known only in the immediate vicinity are confusing.
3. **WHAT** the problem is aboard your boat.
4. Type of assistance needed.
5. Number of people aboard and condition of any injured.
6. Present seaworthiness of your vessel.
7. Description of your vessel (length, type, cabin, masts, power, color of hull, superstructure and trim).
8. Your listening frequency and schedule.

### If you observe another vessel in distress, give:

1. Your position and, if possible, the bearing and distance of the vessel in difficulty.
2. Nature of distress.
3. Description of vessel in distress (see item 7 above).
4. Your intentions, course, speed, etc.
5. Your radio call sign, name of your vessel, listening frequency and schedule.

**If no one responds to your distress call, the Coast Guard recommends that you turn on your EPIRB and repeat the call at intervals until an answer is received.**

**NOTE: The international sign for an aircraft that wants to direct a surface craft to a vessel in distress is:** Circling the surface craft, opening and closing the throttle or changing propeller pitch (noticeable by change in sound) while crossing ahead of the surface craft, and proceeding in the direction of the vessel in distress. If you receive such a signal, you should follow the aircraft. If you cannot do so, try to inform the aircraft by any available means.

If your assistance is no longer needed, the aircraft will cross your wake, opening and closing the throttle or changing the propeller pitch. If you are radio-equipped, you should attempt to communicate with the aircraft on Channel 16 when the

aircraft makes the above signals or makes any obvious attempt to attract your attention. In the event you cannot communicate by radio, be alert for a message block dropped from the aircraft.

**B. If you need information or assistance from the Coast Guard** (other than in a distress), call COAST GUARD on Channel 16 (The Distress and Calling Frequency). In this situation, you will normally be shifted to a common working frequency (21, 22 or 23) allowing the DISTRESS frequency to remain open.

**Radio Checks:** Do not use Channel 16 to call the Coast Guard merely for a radio check. Such use is prohibited by the Federal Communications Commission.

**C. After the emergency is over, notify the Coast Guard promptly.**

## Accident Reporting

Boat operators involved in an accident must: (1) provide their name, address and vessel registration number to other involved parties; (2) render assistance to any injured people; and (3) in case of a death or disappearance, report the accident without delay to law enforcement officials.

Boat operators or owners must also make a written report of a boating accident to DBW within 48 hours when:

- A person dies within 24 hours of the accident, disappears, or is injured and requires medical treatment beyond first aid.
- Total damage to all vessels involved and other property is more than \$500 or there is complete loss of a vessel.

In all other incidents requiring a written accident report, the report must be made within 10 days of the accident. Failure to comply with the above requirements is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment up to six months, or both.

This booklet contains an accident report form that may be used for such incidents. Forms are also available through some sheriffs' and harbormasters' offices and police departments. They may also be obtained by contacting DBW or by visiting [www.dbw.ca.gov](http://www.dbw.ca.gov) and clicking on "Publications."

## False Search and Rescue Calls

Any individual who reports to a state or local agency that an emergency exists, knowing that the report is false, is guilty of a misdemeanor and can be found liable for the expense of the emergency response. An emergency includes any condition that results in, or could result in, the response of a public official in an authorized emergency vehicle, vessel or aircraft.

It is a felony for any individual to report or cause any report to be made to any state or local government agency that an emergency exists if he or she knows or should know that the response to the report is likely to cause death or great bodily injury and such injury or death is sustained by any person as a result of the false report.