

Marine Notice No. 13 of 2012

Amended: 22/11/2022

This Marine Notice should be associated with the Marine Notices listed at the end of the notice.

Notice to all Shipowners, Fishing Vessel Owners, Shipmasters, Skippers, Fishermen, Yachtsmen, Seafarers, Marine radio and electronic suppliers, and Marine radio course providers.

Irish Ship Radio Licence and EPIRB databases – Data confirmation, updating and correction.

Introduction

Ship Radio Licencing and EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons) registration database systems are key tools in providing a fast response to maritime emergency incidents. Therefore, it is essential that the information held is kept accurate and up to date as, over time, the information can change. There is a legal requirement under Ship Radio Licencing legislation for this information, or change of information, to be provided to the Department of Transport.

It is also important that false distress alerts can be detected as soon as possible after being initiated, so that Search and Rescue units are not activated in error.

Background

Ship Radio Licensing stems from international regulatory requirements incorporated in Irish law. Ship Radio Licensing ensures that radio equipment used on board ships does not cause undue interference to other communications equipment, and that all Irish ship radio installations are operated by competent persons, trained in compliance with international standards.

Licensing details – including the call sign of the vessel, name of licensee and other information – are sent to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), for inclusion in the Maritime mobile Access and Retrieval System (MARS) database, and are also provided to the Irish Coast Guard. This information can be used to assist in co-ordinating Search and Rescue (SAR) operations within the Irish Search and Rescue region.

What is the ITU MARS database and what is it used for?

The Maritime mobile Access and Retrieval System (MARS) database system has been developed by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for the purpose of providing the maritime community – in particular those entities that are involved in Search and Rescue activities – with the most up-to-date data registered in the ITU master ship station database. This is updated weekly and is available on a 24-hour per day, 7-days per week basis. The system contains characteristics of ship stations, coast and coast earth stations participating in the GMDSS Search and Rescue system. Every state is required to give the most up-to-date information.

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) registration: The frequencies in the band 406.0 - 406.1 MHz are reserved for the exclusive use of distress beacons operating with satellite systems, and it is on the 406.025, .028 or .037 MHz frequencies that a distress radio beacon EPIRB transmits, if activated. Each EPIRB is associated with one ship; some larger vessels may carry more than one EPIRB. An EPIRB must not be confused with a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB). The PLB is an alerting beacon, which is personal to an individual and meets a lower performance standard and does not have all of the capabilities of the marine EPIRB.

The EPIRB transmission is detected by instruments on board satellites in the COSPAS-SARSAT International Satellite System for Search and Rescue. A Local Users Terminal (LUT), which is a ground receiving station, receives and processes the satellite downlink signal, thereby generating a distress alert. The distress alert is passed to a Mission Control Centre which relays it to the Search and Rescue point-of-contact. For an Irish-registered beacon this would be the Irish Coast Guard's Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) in Dublin.

The signal transmitted by the distress radio beacon includes a digital message, which allows the transmission of encoded data – such as the unique identifier for the beacon that transmitted the alert, and the beacon's position (if the beacon has an integral position-fixing system such as GPS). Otherwise, the beacon's signal may need to be detected by two or three satellites before its position can be sufficiently estimated, and therefore it may take longer for SAR to be initiated.

The unique identifier links the beacon to the data in the Irish EPIRB Registry, part of the Irish Maritime Radio Licence System (IMRAD) – and made available to the Irish Coast Guard – and thus to the vessel. This database is available 24/7 and gives the Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre critical information, such as what type of vessel is in distress. They need to know whether they are dealing with a cruise ship carrying thousands of people, a general cargo ship or tanker, or a fishing boat or a yacht, to know what response is needed. This information may also allow the vessel's shore-contact to be contacted to ensure that it is not a false distress if, for example, the beacon accidentally activated while the vessel was alongside in port.

It is mandatory to register 406 MHz beacons (EPIRB or PLB) with the appropriate authority. Changes to registered beacons must also be notified, and it is an offence by the Owner and/or the Operator not to follow these requirements. Similarly changes to radio licence details must also be notified.

The online Ship Radio Licence and EPIRB Registration system: [Irish Maritime Radio Licence System \(IMRAD\)](#), is provided for applications for new and changes to existing radio licence and EPIRB registrations.

Further information from:

Marine Survey Office

Tel: 01-678 3400

Email: MSO@transport.gov.ie .

Any queries relating to Personal Locator Beacons (PLB) registration may be addressed to:

The Commission for Communications Regulation,
Block DEF,
Abbey Court,
Irish Life Centre,
Lower Abbey Street,
Dublin 1.
website: www.comreg.ie
email: licensing@comreg.ie
Tel: +353 (0)1 8049600.

Licensing Regulations are implemented in Ireland by the *Wireless Telegraphy Acts 1926 to 1972* and the *Communications Regulation Act 2002*, as well as the *Wireless Telegraphy (Ship Station Radio Licence) Regulations, 2006* [S.I. No. 414 of 2006]. Irish legislation is available from the Government Publications Sales Office, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2, Tel: (01) 6476834, or from the website: www.irishstatutebook.ie.

The International Regulations are contained in the ITU Radio Regulation latest edition, Geneva 2008.

The following Marine Notices are also relevant:

No.25 of 2010 - *Personal Locator Beacons (PLB) Registry*,

No.41 of 2009 - *Coding and Servicing of 406MHz Satellite EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons)*,

No.25 of 2006 - *Changes in requirements for ships subject to SOLAS, Chapter IV, concerning the maintenance of EPIRBs*, and

Marine Notice No. 8 of 2006 - *Registration and Care of COSPAS-SARSAT 406 MHz EPIRB's Installed on Irish Vessels*.

Director General,
Maritime Safety Directorate,
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport,
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, Ireland.

26/03/2012

Amended: 22/11/2022

For any technical assistance in relation to this Marine Notice, please contact:
The Marine Survey Office, email: MSO@transport.gov.ie
For general enquiries, please contact the Maritime Safety Policy Division, email:
MaritimeSafetyPolicyDivision@transport.gov.ie
Written enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to:
Dept. of Transport, Maritime Safety Policy Division, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.
email: MarineNotices@transport.gov.ie or visit us at: www.gov.ie/transport