



Marine Notice No. 40 of 2019

Notice to all Masters, Owners, Operators and Users of Pleasure and Recreational Craft.

Limitations of Mobile Phone Use for Emergency Communication at Sea

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport wishes to highlight the importance of having reliable means of communication in the event of an emergency while at sea or on inland waters.

Users of recreational craft are urged to carry marine VHF equipment on-board as the primary means of Distress and Safety communication. In addition, the carriage of an EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) and/or PLB (Personal Locator Beacons) as a secondary means of distress alerting is strongly advised.

The use of mobile phones should not be considered as a suitable substitute or be relied upon as the only means of emergency communication at sea.

Mobile phone coverage at sea is limited and unreliable. Mobile phones are also highly susceptible to failure due to water ingress.

The use of VHF makes it possible to broadcast to, and receive from, all vessels and coast stations within the vicinity in the event of an emergency. This enables direct communication with search and rescue authorities and other vessels in a position to render assistance.

The use of mobile phones by-passes well established international marine distress communications systems and procedures. Consequently a greater risk of communications difficulties or a complete breakdown is introduced if mobile phones are relied upon. Requests for assistance by mobile phone do not immediately alert other vessels in the vicinity. Subsequent on-scene communications can be restricted or delayed if a mobile phone is the sole means of communication. There is a risk that vital information is lost or misrepresented by the introduction of further relay links in the communications chain. Valuable time may be lost while the relevant Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Centre processes the information, re-broadcasts the information to all vessels on distress channel(s) in the vicinity and/or tasks SAR (Search and Rescue) assets to assist.

Through the extensive marine VHF communications network which is monitored by the Irish Coast Guard, the coast of Ireland is defined as being within radiotelephone coverage of at least one VHF coast station in which continuous DSC (Digital Selective Calling) alerting is available. Information on the VHF Distress Alert Procedure and Irish Coast Guard Marine VHF Network is contained in Appendix 1.

Where practicable, recreational craft should maintain a continuous listening watch on VHF channel 16 and DSC watch on VHF channel 70.

Notwithstanding established procedures, any vessel, survival craft or person in distress, should use any means available to attract attention, make known their position and obtain help.

For further information, The Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft is an invaluable source of information, advice and best practice operational guidance for owners, masters, operators and users of a range of pleasure and recreational craft operating in Irish coastal and inland waters. This publication includes guidelines for the safe operation of recreational craft and details of the legislative requirements that apply to such craft. Particular attention is directed to Chapter 11 which includes details of emergency distress procedures.

The Code of Practice is a free document and hardcopies can be obtained on request, in both Irish and English, from the Maritime Safety Policy Division of the Department at email MarineLeisureSafety@dtas.gov.ie.

The Code is also available to view or download from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport [website](#) and www.safetyonthewater.ie.

Marine Notices are issued purely for maritime safety and navigation reasons and should not be construed as conferring right or granting permissions.

Irish Maritime Administration,
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport,
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.

30/09/2019

<p>For any technical assistance in relation to this Marine Notice, please contact: The Marine Survey Office, tel: +353-(0)1-678 3400. For general enquiries, please contact the Maritime Safety Policy Division, tel: +353-(0)1-678 3418. Written enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to: Dept. of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Maritime Safety Policy Division, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland. email: MarineNotices@dtas.gov.ie or visit us at: www.gov.ie</p>
--

Appendix 1: Distress Alert Procedure and Irish Coast Guard Marine VHF Network

In the event of an emergency initiate a DSC distress alert if this function is available by lifting the cover on the red SOS button and pressing the button for at least 5 seconds.
And/Or Call Valentia, Malin or Dublin Coast Guard on VHF Channel 16 using the following procedure:

"MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, This is 'NAME OF VESSEL', 'NAME OF VESSEL', 'NAME OF VESSEL'

MAYDAY, 'NAME OF VESSEL', STATE THE POSITION OF THE VESSEL

(If possible give the position from a GPS receiver or bearings from and distance to any known fixed points e.g. "Position one mile South of Fastnet Lighthouse")

STATE THE NATURE OF DISTRESS. (e.g. sinking, man overboard, fire on board, ...)

STATE THE NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD.

STATE ANY OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION. OVER"

In addition Activate the vessel's EPIRB or PLB if available.

24 Hour Listening Watch Maintained on VHF 16 and Working Channels (other than Channel 67)

