



Distress Signals

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The official list of Distress Signals is given in the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collision at Sea

1. A gun or other explosive signal fired at intervals of about one minute.
2. A continuous sounding of any fog-signalling apparatus (now recommended to use "SOS").
3. Rockets or shells throwing red stars, fired one at a time at short intervals.
4. A signal made by wireless telegraphy (W/T) or by any other signalling method, consisting of SOS in Morse Code.

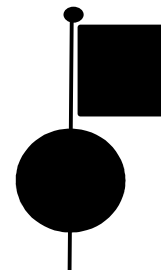


5. A signal by radiotelephony (R/T) consisting of the spoken word - "MAYDAY!"



6. International Code Flag Signal of distress - NC

7. A signal consisting of a square flag having above or below it a ball or anything resembling a ball.

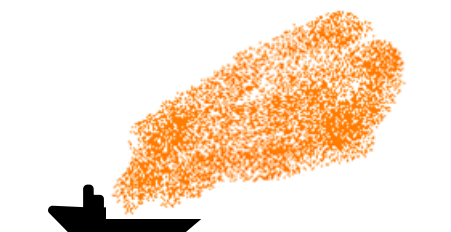


8. Flames on the vessel - as from a burning tar barrel, oil barrel, etc.

9. A rocket parachute flare or a hand flare showing a red light.

10. A smoke signal giving off a volume of orange coloured smoke.

11. Slowly raising and lowering of arms outstretched to each side.





Flares

Flares have two functions;

- To draw attention
- To pinpoint position.

Hand-held flares

A hand-held red flare burns very brightly and is highly visible for about 8 km day or night. It burns for about 60 seconds. Generally used at night, in poor visibility or in high wind. A hand-held orange flare burns for about 40 seconds, and is visible for about 3 km. Generally used in daylight, good visibility and light wind. Both are used to guide rescuers to you when in view. A hand-held white flare burns for about 50 seconds.

It is used at night to attract attention to warn off a possible collision. Hand-held flares should be held well clear, at arms length and downwind of yourself or others, in order to avoid injury from burning particles of the flare and sparks.

Cartridge flares

Red, orange and white flares held on a cartridge holder with a pen- type projector used to project each them to a height of 60m and burn for about 5 seconds. Suitable only for inland and close inshore waters. They should be aimed vertically when fired.

Some important things to note when using or handling flares;

- All flares and smoke signals should be stored in a sturdy waterproof container
- Ensure all aboard know about them and their location
- Out-of-date flares are unreliable and should be discarded. They usually have a life span of about 3 years
- Inspect all flares regularly and replace any which are suspect
- Immediately discard misfired flares and signals
- Do not use all your flares at once and then sit in the dark with nobody able to find you.

Stowage & use of flares

Modern flares are almost waterproof, but they should still be kept dry whenever possible. On extended cruises don't stow them in a buoyancy tank, or you may be unable to reach them if needed. Flares have a shelf life of three years, after which they must be replaced.

Read the operating instructions before you go afloat, so that you will know what to do in an emergency. Don't point the flare at anybody (including yourself when you fire it, but hold it as high as you can and point it slightly downwind).