

Distress signals

Radio

The radio is usually the best means of calling for any kind of help. You are able to specify what kind of help and the level of urgency. It is also best for signaling distress. It has longer range than visual signals, can continue sending as long as there is battery power, and it lets you state your exact position – Sea Rescue can also home-in on the signal.

EPIRB

An EPIRB is the device that will call for help even after a vessel has sunk. It can only send a distress message with few other details, but once activated it works with no assistance from you.

Flares

Red hand-held flares and orange smoke flares are short range – you need to see a potential rescuer before you use. Parachute rocket flares have a longer range but, ideally, you would use them in conjunction with your radio. Your rescuer might ask you to fire one to give a target to steer towards.

Phone

A mobile phone is not accepted as a substitute for a radio, but it can be a useful back up. If you have to abandon your vessel and leave the radio behind, you should certainly take your phone with you.

Other distress signals

Other internationally recognized distress signals include:



- A gun or other explosive signal fired at intervals of about a minute;
- Continuous sounding of a fog horn;
- Waving – slowly raising and lowering outstretched arms;
- Smoke and or flames on a vessel;
- The international code flags N over C;