

VHF RADIO USE

Radios That You Need

Before you purchase anything else, make sure you have a VHF marine radio. A VHF marine radio is the single most important radio system you should buy. It is probably also the most inexpensive. If you plan to travel more than a few miles offshore, plan to purchase an MF/HF radiotelephone or mobile satellite telephone, an emergency position indicating radio beacon or EPIRB, and a second VHF radio or cellular telephone as well. Mobile satellite telephones are becoming more common and more inexpensive. The mobile satellite will provide easier and clearer communications than the MF/HF radiotelephone, but the HF radiotelephone will receive high seas marine weather warnings.

Radio Watchkeeping Regulations

If you have a VHF-FM radio, there are certain regulations in place for monitoring/listening to your radio. Please read our radio watchkeeping section for more information.

Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!...Sending a distress call

You may only have seconds to send a distress call. Here's what you should do:

Transmit, in this order:

1. If you have an MF/HF radiotelephone tuned to 2182 kHz, send the radiotelephone alarm signal if one is available. If you have a VHF marine radio, tune it to channel 16. Unless you know you are outside VHF range of shore and ships, call on channel 16 first.
2. Distress signal "MAYDAY", spoken three times.
3. The words "THIS IS", spoken once.
4. Name of vessel in distress (spoken three times) and call sign or boat registration number, spoken once.
5. Repeat "MAYDAY" and name of vessel, spoken once.
6. Give position of vessel by latitude or longitude or by bearing (true or magnetic, state which) and distance to a well-know landmark such as a navigational aid or small island, or in any terms which will assist a responding station in locating the vessel in distress. Include any information on vessel movement such as course, speed and destination.
7. Nature of distress (sinking, fire etc.).
8. Kind of assistance desired.
9. Number of persons on board.
10. Any other information which might facilitate rescue, such as length or tonnage of vessel, number of persons needing medical attention, color hull, cabin, masks, etc.
11. The word "OVER"