

CALLING FOR HELP

There are a number of different products that can be used to call for help. With all activities we strongly encourage you to take a means of calling for help that is most suitable to your activity. We advise that you know how to use it, and keep it within reach at all times.



Want to know more?

RNLI.org/RespectTheWater

HANDHELD VHF/DSC

Very High Frequency/
Digital Selective Calling



Personal or vessel:

PERSONAL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-MANY

Communicates distress message to all shore stations and vessels in range.

Range:

Up to 5 nmiles

From 2.75 nmiles

(handheld to handheld)

VHF range is limited by antenna height.

SUITABLE FOR



PLB

Personal Locator Beacon



Personal or vessel:

PERSONAL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-ONE

The distress signals are passed to the relevant maritime rescue coordination centre, which will launch the search and rescue services.

Range:

Worldwide coverage

(frequency 406 MHz and 121.5 MHz)

SUITABLE FOR



MOBILE PHONE

(in a waterproof pouch)



Personal or vessel:

PERSONAL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-ONE

Call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard, who will launch the correct search and rescue services.

Range:

Up to 18 nmiles

Network dependant, mobile coverage is generally poor around the coast, although coverage for voice calls is usually better than data.

SUITABLE FOR



EPIRB

Emergency Position
Indicating Radio Beacon



Personal or vessel:

VESSEL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-ONE

The distress signals are passed to the relevant maritime rescue coordination centre, which will launch the search and rescue services.

Range:

Worldwide coverage

(frequency 406 MHz and 121.5 MHz)

SUITABLE FOR



THINGS TO CONSIDER

- If possible, buy a DSC-equipped radio (some are not). A DSC distress alert is a recognised emergency signal, and it also transmits your location.
- Send a distress alert followed by a mayday voice call on Channel 16. This communicates the distress message to all vessels and shore stations in range.
- Requires an operator's licence, a ship's portable radio or ship's radio licence (free in the UK if requested online) and a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number, which comes with the radio licence.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Recognised emergency signal.
- Manually activated only.
- Must be registered.
- Should always be on your person.
- Not all PLBs inherently float.
- Can also be used on land in areas where no phone signal is available.
- Unit needs to be held out of water for it to transmit.
- Transmits for 24 hours plus.
- Divers will need to carry the PLB in a dive canister.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Keep your mobile in a waterproof pouch. You should wear this on your person so it's within easy reach – it's no use if you can't reach it.
- Smart phones can provide a location, but emergency calls should be made by voice (call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard). Text messages and map locations are often no use to the Coastguard.
- The RYA SafeTrx app can be used to log, track and send alerts about your trip. Visit www.safetrxapp.com

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Recognised emergency signal.
- Can be float-free, automatic or manual.
- Must be registered.
- Always choose a GPS-enabled EPIRB.
- Can be dropped next to a man overboard to mark their position.
- Fitted with a flashing light.
- Radio direction finding equipment can be fitted and used to home in on to beacon.
- Transmits for 48 hours plus.

Lifeboats

CALLING FOR HELP DEVICES



GMDSS: The Global Maritime Distress Signalling System is the internationally recognised way of calling for help on the sea. To ensure your message gets through to the Coastguard, it is best to choose a device recognised under the scheme.

* 1 nautical mile (nmile) is equivalent to about 1.2 miles.

ACTIVITY KEY



GEN08

Lifeboats

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea
Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a charity registered in
England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736).
Registered charity number 20003326 in the Republic of Ireland

VHF/DSC

Very High Frequency/
Digital Selective Calling



Personal or vessel:

VESSEL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-MANY

Communicates distress messages to all shore stations and vessels in range.

Range:

Maximum 30 nmiles

(depending on height of antenna.)

SUITABLE FOR



THINGS TO CONSIDER

- A DSC distress alert is a recognised emergency signal and it also transmits your location.
- Must have ship's radio licence, operator's licence and MMSI number.
- Send a distress alert followed by a mayday voice call on Channel 16. This communicates the distress message to all vessels and shore stations in range.

AIS

Automatic
Identification
System Man
Overboard Device



Personal or vessel:

PERSONAL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-MANY

Communicates by electronically exchanging data with AIS receivers on ships and inland base stations.

Range:

Less than 5 nmiles in open water

Could be as little as 2.5 nmiles – dependent on receiving antenna height.

SUITABLE FOR



THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Can be automatically activated – will work if casualty is unconscious.
- Don't need to register.
- In a man overboard situation, this device automatically alerts all AIS receivers within range.
- Poor range if affected by obstacles.
- Should always be on your person.

TRACKER



Personal or vessel:

PERSONAL AND VESSEL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-ONE

Range:

Varies May be global (if it uses a satellite communications system) or local (if it uses a mobile phone local GSM network).

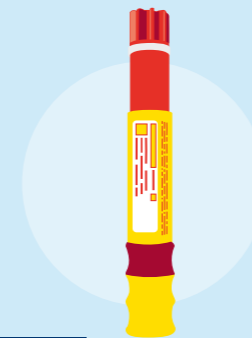
SUITABLE FOR



THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Yearly airtime contracts can be expensive, however trackers can be hired for shorter periods.
- They often have social functions to allow tracking by friends and family. Basic messaging is available on some models.
- SOS functions do not transmit directly to maritime rescue services, so rescue can take longer.
- Be aware that some trackers have no SOS function.

FLARES



Personal or vessel:

PERSONAL AND VESSEL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-MANY

Range:

Parachute rocket – up to 28 nmiles

Hand held rocket – up to 5 nmiles

Orange smoke – up to 3 nmiles

SUITABLE FOR



THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Not advised as a primary means of calling for help.
- Learn how to use them before you need them.
- Can be used to help search and rescue services pin point your position.

EVDS

Electronic Visual
Distress Signals



Personal or vessel:

PERSONAL AND VESSEL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-MANY

Range:

Up to 7 nmiles

(depending upon the height above the sea of the observer and signaller, as well as the manufacturer.)

SUITABLE FOR

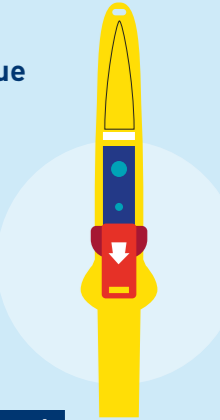


THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Could be confused with background lights.
- Can be turned on and off.
- Can be thrown to a person in the water to aid their recovery.
- User replaceable batteries.
- Some double as a torch.

SART

Search and Rescue
Transponder
(AIS or Radar)



Personal or vessel:

VESSEL

GMDSS approved:



One-to-one or one-to-many:

ONE-TO-MANY

Signals made will be seen via vessels equipped with AIS or radar and any coastguard stations within range.

Range:

Up to 10 nmiles

Could be as little as 2.5 nmiles – dependent on receiving antenna height.

SUITABLE FOR



THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Can be used for alerting and position finding.
- Must be placed as high as possible.
- Radar SARTs only transmit when they receive a radar signal.
- AIS SARTs transmit continuously.