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.

**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 miles
    - From 2.75 nmiles (handheld to handheld)
  - **Range:** Worldwide coverage (frequency 468 MHz and 121.5 MHz)

**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.

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**PLB**

*Personal Locator Beacon*

- **Personal or vessel:** PERSONAL
- **GMDSS approved:** ✓
- **One-to-one or one-to-many:** ONE-TO-MANY
  - 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)

**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 kept out of water for it to transmit.
- Transmits for 48 hours plus.
- Divers will need to carry the PLB in a dive canister.

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**MOBILE PHONE**

*(in a waterproof pouch)*

- **Personal or vessel:** PERSONAL
- **GMDSS approved:** ✓
- **One-to-one or one-to-many:** ONE-TO-MANY
  - Network dependant, mobile coverage is generally poor around the coast, although coverage for voice calls is usually better than data.
  - **Range:**
    - Up to 18 miles
    - Network dependant, mobile coverage is generally poor around the coast, although coverage for voice calls is usually better than data.

**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.
- 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.
- Can be fitted and used to home in on to beacon.

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**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)

**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.

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**ACTIVITY KEY**

- Angling
- Angling from a boat
- Bodyboarding
- Commercial fishing
- Deep sea fishing
- Dinghy
- Kayaking and canoeing
- Kitesurfing
- Motorboating
- Open water swimming
- Personal watercraft
- Rowing
- Stand up paddleboarding
- Surfing
- Swimming
- Tomblasting
- Windsurfing
- Yacht sailing
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Yacht sailing

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**NETWORK**

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

Registered charity number 20003326 in the Republic of Ireland

Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a charity registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736).

Want to know more?

RNLI.org/RespectTheWater

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

VHF/DSC
- Very High Frequency / Digital Selective Calling
- Personal or vessel: VESSEL
- GMDSS approved: Yes
- 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.)

AIS
- Automatic Identification System Man Overboard Device
- Personal or vessel: PERSONAL
- GMDSS approved: No
- 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: Yes
- One-to-one or one-to-many: ONE-TO-ONE
- Communicates by electronically exchanging data with AIS receivers on ships and inland base stations.
- Range: Varies May be global (if it uses a satellite communications system) or local (if it uses a mobile phone local GSM network).

FLARES
- Personal or vessel: PERSONAL AND VESSEL
- GMDSS approved: No
- One-to-one or one-to-many: ONE-TO-MANY
- Hand held rocket – up to 5 nmiles
- Orange smoke – up to 3 nmiles.

SUITABLE FOR

EVDS
- Electronic Visual Distress Signals
- Personal or vessel: PERSONAL AND VESSEL
- GMDSS approved: No
- One-to-one or one-to-many: ONE-TO-MANY
- Hand held rocket – up to 5 nmiles
- Orange smoke – up to 3 nmiles

SUITABLE FOR

SART
- Search and Rescue Transponder (AIS or Radar)
- Personal or vessel: VESSEL
- GMDSS approved: Yes
- 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

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.

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.

SUITABLE FOR

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Yearly airtime contracts can be expensive, however trackers can be hired for shorter periods.
- Can be used to help search and rescue services pin point your position.

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.

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.

SUITABLE FOR