

Procedure for responding to DSC Alerts

Ships in area A1 that receive a DSC Distress alert on Channel 70 (DSC) should:

- Commence log keeping
- Inform Master/Skipper
- Set watch on VHF Channel 16
- Wait a short interval (5 minutes) for a Coast Station to acknowledge by DSC
- If no Coast Station involvement, acknowledge by voice
- No response to the voice acknowledgment, no working heard and the alert repeats, acknowledge by DSC after 5 minutes have elapsed
- Relay ashore by any means

Ships in area A2 or A3 that receive a DSC Distress alert on Channel 70 (DSC) should:

- Commence log keeping
- Inform Master/Skipper
- Set watch on VHF Channel 16
- Acknowledge by voice immediately
- No response to the voice acknowledgment, no working heard and the alert repeats, acknowledge by DSC after 5 minutes have elapsed
- Relay ashore by any means

Ships in area A2 that receive a DSC Distress alert on MF (2187.5 kHz) should:

- Commence log keeping
- Inform Master/Skipper
- Set watch on MF 2182 kHz
- Wait a short interval (5 minutes) for a Coast Station to acknowledge by DSC
- If no Coast Station involvement, acknowledge by voice on MF 2182 kHz
- No response to the voice acknowledgment, no working heard and the alert repeats, acknowledge by DSC after 5 minutes have elapsed
- Relay ashore by any means. If using a DSC, it should preferably be addressed to an MRCC or a Geographical Area and not to all ships

Ships in area A3 that receive a DSC Distress alert on MF (2187.5 kHz) should:

- Commence log keeping
- Inform Master/Skipper
- Set watch on MF 2182 kHz
- Acknowledge by voice immediately on MF 2182 kHz
- No response to the voice acknowledgment, no working heard and the alert repeats, acknowledge by DSC after 5 minutes have elapsed
- Relay ashore by any means. If using a DSC, it should preferably be addressed to an MRCC or a Geographical Area and not to all ships

Ships receiving a DSC Distress alert from another ship on HF should:

- Commence log keeping
- Inform Master/Skipper
- Do not acknowledge (at any stage)
- Set watch on the appropriate R/T or Telex frequency in the same HF band. Frequency in the 8 MHz band (8291 kHz) may in many cases be an appropriate first choice
- Listen for 5 minutes for Coast Station acknowledgment or distress working
- If no working heard, relay ashore by any means. If using a DSC, it should preferably be addressed to an MRCC or a Geographical Area and not to all ships

Radar SART

If you see a SART on your Radar screen, head towards it, and set watch on Ch16 then relay ashore by any means.

The purpose of a Radar SART is to indicate the position of persons or vessels in distress on a marine Radar. When switched on it will only transmit signals when triggered into operation by the Radar transmission from an external ship's Radar operating in the 9-10 GHz, X (3 cm) Band.

The range of a SART is not very great. Typically, when held upright by a person standing in a lifeboat, it will produce a maximum useful range of approximately 6 miles for a ship and 40 M for a SAR Helicopter. Once interrogated, 12 distinctive dots appear on the rescuer's Radar screen, the dot nearest the centre of the screen is the SART. When the SART is at 1 M range the dots become arcs and eventually form concentric circles at close range.

AIS SART

If you see a AIS SART on your navigation equipment screen (e.g. chartplotter), head towards it, and set watch on Ch16 then relay ashore by any means.

The purpose of an AIS SART is to indicate the position course and speed of persons or vessels in distress on suitably enabled electronic navigation equipment such as a stand-alone unit, an ECDIS (Electronic Chart Display and Information System) or a chart plotter integrated with AIS overlays/inputs. AIS SARTs send a direct wave operate on two frequencies in the Marine VHF Band and should not be confused with Radar SARTs.

AIS SARTs have built in MMSI numbers beginning with 970, the remaining digits indicate the manufacturer and the serial number of the AIS SART, e.g., 970 000 099. AIS SARTs have greater detection ranges than Radar SARTS. Approximately 10 M for a ship and 130 M for a SAR Helicopter.

DISTRESS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Coast Station in receipt of Distress alert will route the alert to an MRCC as soon as possible. Ships receiving a DSC Distress alert from another ship should defer the R/T (voice) acknowledgment of the alert for a short interval (5 minutes), if the ship is within an area covered by one or more Coast Stations. The Coast Station would acknowledge by DSC, which will also be received by all ships in range. A Coast Station or MRCC having received and acknowledged a terrestrial DSC distress alert, will normally re-transmit the information received as a DSC distress alert relay. Ships receiving a DSC distress alert relay from a Coast Station on VHF Ch70 addressed to all ships should not acknowledge by DSC but should acknowledge by R/T on Ch16 by sending RECEIVED MAYDAY. If there is no Coast Station involvement and the ship needs to acknowledge, it should be by R/T.

MAYDAY

NAME OF VESSEL IN DISTRESS (or Coast Station relaying the alert)

THIS IS *(repeat name of your vessel 3 times)*

CALL SIGN **MMSI** *(of your vessel)*

RECEIVED MAYDAY

Any additional information ... (i.e. your position, speed, range, bearing, assistance to offer etc.)

OVER

DISTRESS RELAY

IF YOU SEE OR HEAR A PERSON OR VESSEL IN DISTRESS, I.E. THERE IS A GRAVE AND IMMINENT DANGER TO A VESSEL OR PERSONS SUCH AS FIRE, SINKING, MAN OVERBOARD etc.

- When a DSC radio receives a Distress Alert and there is no DSC acknowledgement after a short interval (**five minutes**) from a Coast Station then, if you are able to offer assistance, acknowledge and then relay by voice on Channel 16 (VHF) or 2182 kHz (MF).
- If you receive DSC Distress alert relay from a Coast Station, then if you are able to offer assistance, acknowledge by voice by sending RECEIVED MAYDAY message.
- You must relay immediately for a vessel that is unable to send a distress themselves, or when you consider further help is required.

Distress Relay message:

MAYDAY RELAY, MAYDAY RELAY, MAYDAY RELAY

ALL STATIONS, ALL STATIONS, ALL STATIONS

(or individual coast station 3x)

THIS IS *(repeat name of your vessel 3 times)*

CALL SIGN **MMSI** *(of your vessel)*

MAYDAY *(Name of vessel in distress)*

CALL SIGN **MMSI** *(of vessel in distress)*

IN POSITION

(Latitude and Longitude, alternatively a true bearing and distance from a known point)

..... *(nature of distress)*

..... **PERSONS ON BOARD** *(if known)*

Any other vital information *(i.e. type of vessel, hull colour, if abandoning to liferaft etc.)*

TIME *(optional – time received or sighted)*

OVER

Release Transmit button. The coastguard should respond and take over distress working and co-ordinate the assistance. If you hear nothing for about 2 minutes repeat the distress relay voice call.