



National Coastwatch Institution EYES ALONG THE COAST FLEETWOOD TRAINING MANUAL



PART 11 DISTRESS, URGENCY, SAFETY & ROUTINE COMMUNICATIONS

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Introduction

As previously stated in Part 10, most leisure boaters buy a two-way radio so they can call for assistance should they need to, but the radios are used for many other purposes: communicating with other vessels, talking to the coastguard, asking for a berth at a marina or even checking with the local NCI station to ascertain the current weather.

In order to facilitate ordered and easily understood communications a series of internationally recognized formats and protocols are needed. These procedures have been developed over many decades as both the communications and cooperation between the countries of the world advanced. Over 200 countries of the world are signed up to these agreements which are drawn up at the World Radio Conference (WRC) attended by delegates from each country. This in turn is overseen by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) which oversees all aspects of the electromagnetic spectrum and its use.

Communications in the maritime VHF radio band are separated as follows:

1. Distress - A series of formatted messages and protocols to deal with emergency situations on Land, on Sea and in the Air.
2. Urgency – A series of formatted messages and protocols to deal with potentially dangerous situations on Land, Sea and in the Air.
3. Safety - A series of formatted messages and protocols to deal with the safety of vehicles and people on Land, Sea and in the Air.
4. Routine – Standard forms of communication to conduct normal day to day operations on Land, Sea or in the Air

Once the province of the military and commercial organisations, digital communication has become increasingly used by civil operators. The most common form in the maritime world is now a Class 'D' marine radio with Digital Selective Calling (DSC). It provides vessels operating in coastal waters with a wide variety of digital facilities, not least of which is the ability to declare a distress situation with automatic digital transfer of considerable information. As a minimum this will include Name, callsign, and Maritime Mobile Service Indicator (MMSI). The MMSI is a unique number issued by OFCOM to a vessel and its DSC radio. The majority of these radios are also fed with position and other relevant information which is also passed automatically.



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Distress Communications

Definition of DISTRESS

A state of distress exists when a Vessel, Aircraft, vehicle or person(s) is in grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance

Distress Proword - 'MAYDAY'

Mayday – spoken 3 times

Mayday Mayday Mayday

Origin from the french “m’aidez” – Help me

Note: Distress Calls are transmitted on CH16 or DSC

The Standard Format of a Mayday Call and Message

Distress CALL Content

Mayday x3
this is (vessel type) Name x 3
Callsign
MMSI No

Example:

Mayday Mayday Mayday
this is Yacht Calypso Calypso Calypso
Charlie Yankee Seven Bravo Tango
MMSI 235467213

Distress MESSAGE Content

M – Mayday Mayday Mayday
I – Identity (Name type)
P – Position (Lat/long or Mark)
D – Distress – nature of distress
A – Assistance required
N – Number of persons on board
I – Information – boat colour etc
O – Over - you really want a reply!!

Mayday this is Yacht Calypso
Charlie Yankee Seven Bravo Tango
MMSI 235467213
My Position 55°37.452 minutes North
003°46.242 minutes West
Engine Fire, Vessel on Fire
Request immediate assistance
Total 3 persons on board
Calypso is a blue sailing yacht
OVER

M I P D A N I O



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NCI Handling of 'MAYDAY' Calls

When a 'Mayday' message is heard on the radio the following immediate actions are to be taken:

- All conversation is to stop and the time is to be noted.
- All Watchkeepers are to write down the 'Mayday Call/Message' and compare them to ensure or correct any discrepancies. Do not embellish or add to what was heard. The watchkeeper manning the log is to enter the Mayday directly into the Log in **RED INK**.
- If no acknowledgement is given by HM Coastguard (HMCG) within 30 seconds then the watch is to phone HMCG using (9)999 and the message is to be passed to them exactly how it was received.
- On completion of this or if the message was acknowledged by HMCG go to the relevant Standard Operating Procedure (SOP 5) and ensure that all the actions included are followed to ensure a successful outcome.

NCI Handling of 'MAYDAY RELAY' Calls

'Mayday Relay' Calls are to be handled in the same manner as the 'Mayday' message.

Imposing and Cancelling Radio Silence

When a distress situation is taking place HMCG may find it necessary to impose 'Radio Silence' on channel 16 or other channels if needed solely to manage the situation. 'Radio Silence' is imposed by the call repeated twice:

'Seelonce Mayday', 'Seelonce Mayday'

Once the Distress situation has finished or is terminated the 'Radio Silence' is canceled by the call repeated twice:

'Seelonce Feenee', Seelonce Feenee'



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Urgency Communications

Definition of URGENCY

A state of Urgency exists when the safety of a vessel, aircraft, vehicle or person(s) is causing concern but that, for the time being at least, there is no immediate danger to anyone's life or to the vessel itself

Urgency Proword - 'PAN PAN'

Pan Pan – spoken 3 times

'Pan Pan' 'Pan Pan' 'Pan Pan'

Origin from the french "Panne" – Broken

Note: Urgency Calls are transmitted on CH16 or DSC

The Standard Format of a Pan Pan Message

There is no formalised message format for the Pan Pan message but it can contain many if not all of the elements of the Mayday message; it will normally include a statement that contact should be maintained at a regular interval.

There is also a Pan Pan message that deals specifically with a medical problem and enables a duplex connection to a hospital doctor.

NCI Handling of 'Pan Pan' Calls

When a 'Mayday' message is heard on the radio the following immediate actions are to be taken:

- All conversation is to stop and the time is to be noted.
- All Watchkeepers are to write down the 'Pan Pan' message and compare them to ensure or correct any discrepancies. Do not embellish or add to what was heard. The watchkeeper manning the log is to enter the Mayday directly into the Log in **RED INK**.



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- If no acknowledgement is given by HM Coastguard (HMCG) within 30 seconds then the watch is to phone HMCG using (9)999 and the message is to be passed to them exactly how it was received.
- On completion of this or if the message was acknowledged by HMCG go to the relevant Standard Operating Procedure (SOP 5) and ensure that all the actions included are followed to ensure a successful outcome.

Safety Communications

Safety messages can be initiated by HMCG or any vessel who wishes to warn other maritime users in the vicinity about potential hazards.

Definition of Safety

Important meteorological, navigational or safety information to pass on

Safety Proword

'Securite' – spoken 3 times

'Securite' 'Securite' 'Securite'

Origin French, securite "safety"

Note: Safety Calls are normally transmitted on CH16 but may be called to other channels

Example: Gale Warnings from the Coastguard

NCI Handling of 'Securite' Calls

There are no special handling instructions for safety messages. However, watchkeepers should use their discretion and take note of any safety problems that may affect users in the local area.

Consideration might be given to including such a report on the standard station broadcast.



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Routine Communications

Routine calls are normal 'traffic' between:

- Vessels
- Vessel to Marinas/Ports
- Vessel to Coastguard
- Occasionally to aircraft/Helicopters

Routine calls are the everyday calls that enable all users in the maritime environment to pass on any information that is needed to operate. This can range from radio checks, entering and leaving marinas', passing passage plans and general location and navigational information.

The actual weather broadcast, weather report and answering of radio checks are all 'Routine Traffic'.