

Emergencies

Emergency Words

All calls are repeated three times.

MAYDAY

A mayday call denotes an emergency involving imminent danger to a vessel and the people on board. If you hear a mayday call you should not transmit, but continue to monitor the radio. If a shore station such as the local Coastguard or Coastal Patrol fails to respond to the call you should attempt to relay the message and render any assistance. An example of a mayday message could be:

“Mayday, Mayday, Mayday this is Phantom, this is Phantom, this is Phantom, a 5m red half cabin, I am three miles off Red Head, we have been swamped by a wave and we are sinking. There are four people overboard. Over.”

PAN PAN

Pan Pan is an urgency message that indicates a vessel is in trouble but not in immediate danger, for example:

“Pan Pan, Pan Pan, Pan Pan, this is Phantom, this is Phantom, this is Phantom, a 5m red half cabin, I am three miles off Red Head, we have been disabled by a wave and require a tow. There are four people onboard. Over.”

SECURITE

Securite messages generally prefix navigational safety messages such as weather reports or navigation hazard updates, for example:

“Securite Securite Securite all ships, all ships, all ships, this is Coast Radio Sydney, Coast Radio Sydney for a renewal of a strong wind warning please switch to channel VHF 67. Out.”

Search and Rescue

Before a search can be initiated, someone must know that you are either in trouble or overdue. So tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.

It is strongly recommended that you log in and log out with a volunteer rescue body.

There are a number of ways that a search and rescue agency can be alerted, including radio

distress calls, distress flares, overdue reports and activation of an EPIRB.

AusSAR, a division of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), is Australia’s national search and rescue authority and runs the Rescue Co-ordination Centre (RCC Australia) in Canberra. RCC Australia can be contacted 24 hours a day on 1800 641 792.

Fire

Fuel fires aboard small vessels spread rapidly and generate intense heat. Few people are able to successfully combat them. The answer to the issue lies in preventing fires rather than fighting them.

Petrol/Other Fuel

A number of fires or explosions occur immediately after vessels have been refuelled. By using common sense and taking proper precautions, boating fires can be prevented as follows:

- have an approved fire extinguisher and service it regularly



Boat fire ... what can happen

- keep the bilge, engine compartment and engine clean and free of combustible materials
- check engine compartments are properly ventilated
- be careful when using fuel stoves and lamps
 - don't store your extinguisher close to the stove or engine compartment
- check your fuel system regularly for leaks
- check the electrical system for faults and keep all components in a clean state
- don't fill your fuel caddies in the boat, take them ashore when fuelling
- clean up fuel spills quickly.

LP Gas

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is noncorrosive and clean-burning. It can cause suffocation if inhaled in sufficient volume.

When buying or selling a boat fitted with LPG burning appliances you should ensure that the gas cylinders have been inspected and that the equipment and hoses are in safe working order. LPG has the same characteristics as water and will flow downwards and gather in the bilge.

Gas storage bottles should be located in a well-ventilated space.

You should:

- ensure all LPG installations are performed and serviced by a licensed gas fitter
- ensure all appliances are firmly secured and protected from draughts
- ensure cylinders and appliances are suitable for marine use and
- in the event of fire, remove LPG cylinders from the heat source. If this is not possible, keep the cylinder cool by spraying water onto it. If flames are threatening to engulf a gas cylinder the vessel should be evacuated.

In the event of a gas leak stop all motors, close all cylinder valves, turn off all appliances and ventilate the vessel. Do not operate any electrical switches until the air is clear. Leakages can lead to suffocation or explosion. To assist in early detection of leaks a strong odour has been added to LPG, but you should consider installing a gas detector:

Persons Overboard

If someone falls overboard from a small open runabout, make sure that everyone onboard keeps the person in sight while you manoeuvre to pick them up. Once the person is alongside, stop the engine and make sure that the weight in the vessel is redistributed before attempting to bring them inboard. Consider bringing them over the stern if the vessel is unstable.

In bigger craft and when operating offshore throw over a lifejacket or marker immediately. If you lose sight of them this will act as a starting point for a search.

Keep the person in sight at all times; tell passengers to act as lookouts.

Quickly establish your position either by reference to shore marks or by a GPS position. An accurate position will be essential if the search requires outside assistance.

Surviving Hypothermia

Hypothermia is the effect of heat loss from the body.

Hypothermia occurs when a person's body temperature is lowered to less than 35°C and affects your brain, heart and other internal organs. While your body begins to cool as soon as you enter the water the full effect of hypothermia can take around 30 minutes. Some of the effects of hypothermia are a reduction of blood flow to the hands, feet and surface of the body, intense shivering in the early stages as the body tries to maintain its core temperature and no shivering in the later stages.

To reduce the risk of hypothermia wear warm, preferably woollen, clothing under wet weather gear.

Various techniques have been developed to prolong survival time, including:

- HELP (Heat Escape Lessening Posture) - limit body heat loss by holding your arms down to your sides and up across your chest, and raising your knees and holding them together
- huddle - by huddling close together with other people, so that your chest and arms are protected, you can reduce the rate at which your body loses heat and increase survival time by up to 50 percent. This is the most effective method of reducing the onset of hypothermia if there is a group in the water.

The key to avoiding cold water immersion and hypothermia is to stay out of the water. Keep the vessel's deck and other areas free of slipping and tripping hazards. If you do fall in remember, don't inhale water, don't panic, keep as much of your body out of the water and wear a lifejacket – it can be the difference in a survival situation.

HELP Position



Huddle Position



Treating Hypothermia

Hypothermia can be mistaken for drowsiness. There are, however, some signs and symptoms which will allow you to make an immediate evaluation:

- adults: cold to touch; pulse slow, weak or imperceptible; breathing slow and shallow
- children: cold to touch; quiet and lacking appetite.

To treat hypothermia you must act quickly but gently. Never give the patient an unwrapped hot-water bottle or give them alcohol. The best method of treatment is to allow the patient to warm naturally where possible and you should:

- remove all wet clothing when warm, dry clothing or blankets are available
- allow the patient to warm gradually with the aid of warm towels and blankets or gentle sources of warmth, including body heat
- transport the victim to medical aid without delay. Their survival could depend on it
- keep an aluminium “space blanket” on board.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide is a colourless and odourless gas produced when carbon based fuel, such as gasoline, diesel, propane, charcoal, or oil burns. High concentrations of carbon monoxide can be fatal within minutes.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include irritated eyes, headaches, nausea and dizziness. As these symptoms are similar to seasickness and intoxication those affected may not receive the medical attention they need.

Boaters need to be aware of the sources inside and outside the vessel that produce carbon monoxide such as engines, generators and fuel burning cooking equipment.

Owners of vessels fitted with a rear vented exhaust system should remind passengers and swimmers that the rear deck and swim platform areas should be avoided when engines are running due to the levels of carbon monoxide. Following is a list of things to do if you suspect a person has been affected by carbon monoxide. Remember to proceed with caution. The victim may be in an area that has high exposure to carbon monoxide, placing you and others in danger.

- evaluate the situation and ventilate the area if possible
- evacuate the area and place the affected victim(s) in fresh air
- observe the victim(s) and administer oxygen if possible
- contact medical help. If the person is not breathing perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) until help arrives
- shut off the potential source of carbon monoxide if possible. Correct ventilation problems and/or repair exhaust problems as appropriate.



Reporting Vessel Incidents

Requirement

If a boating accident occurs in any port or navigable water in NSW, the master of the vessel must:

- stop the vessel immediately
- give any assistance which may be necessary
- produce any licence
- give details to any person having reasonable grounds for requesting them. This includes the master's name and address and any distinguishing number (that is, registration number or permit number) which is required to be displayed on the vessel

- if requested by a NSW Maritime officer or any Police officer, provide the following details:
 - time, place and nature of accident
 - name and registration number of every vessel involved in the incident
 - name and address of every person who was concerned with or witnessed the accident
 - extent of any injury or damage resulting from the accident
 - produce a boat driver's licence or certificate of competency and
- where the accident has resulted in the death of, or injury to, a person; or damage in excess of \$5000 to a vessel, or any

other property, a written report must be forwarded to NSW Maritime within 24 hours setting out the particulars unless these have already been given to a NSW Maritime officer or Police officer.

Vessel Incident Report Forms

Vessel incident report forms are available from any NSW Maritime operations centre, the Police, the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and Australian Volunteer Coast Guard.

Note: A penalty exists for not reporting an accident to NSW Maritime.

Emergency Contacts:

- Ring 000; or
- VHF16