MSC.1/Circ.1656
28 November 2022

GMDSS OPERATING GUIDANCE FOR SHIPS IN DISTRESS SITUATIONS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 106th session (2 to 11 November 2022), approved the revised GMDSS operating guidance for ships in distress situations, as set out in the annex, prepared by the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR), at its ninth session (21 to 30 June 2022).

2 This circular provides guidance concerning the use of appropriate radiocommunication equipment in distress situations, in accordance with chapter IV of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974. The Guidance in the annex is recommended to be displayed on ships’ bridges as an A4 size poster.

3 Member Governments are invited to bring the annexed Guidance to the attention of seafarers and all other parties concerned.

4 This circular becomes effective on 1 January 2024, superseding COM/Circ.108 as from that date.

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ANNEX

GMDSS OPERATING GUIDANCE FOR SHIPS IN DISTRESS SITUATIONS

Is vessel sinking or to be abandoned?

Yes → Transmit, if time allows, distress call by HF/MF/VHF DSC or RMSS*

No → Embark in survival craft with VHF, SART and, if possible, EPIRB

Switch on EPIRB and SART immediately and leave on

Is immediate help needed?

Yes → Transmit distress call by HF/MF/VHF DSC or RMSS*

No → Response received?

Yes → Communicate on HF/MF/VHF or RMSS* to RCC and ships

No → Communicate on HF/MF/VHF or RMSS* to RCC and ships

Switch on EPIRB and SART manually on board

A potential problem exists?

Yes → Notify RCC by HF/MF/VHF DSC or RMSS*

No → Yes

Response received?

Yes → Communicate on HF/MF/VHF or RMSS* to RCC and ships

No → No

No

* Recognized mobile satellite service

1. EPIRB should float free and activate automatically if it cannot be taken into survival craft.
2. Where necessary, ships should use any appropriate means to alert other ships.
3. Nothing above is intended to preclude the use of any and all available means of distress alerting, including those listed in COLREG 72, annex IV.

Frequencies for Distress Communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital selective calling (DSC)</th>
<th>Radiotelephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VHF 70</td>
<td>Channel 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF 2 187.5 kHz</td>
<td>2 182 kHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF4 4 207.5 kHz</td>
<td>4 125 kHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF6 6 312.0 kHz</td>
<td>6 215 kHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF8 8 414.5 kHz</td>
<td>8 291 kHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF12 12 577.0 kHz</td>
<td>12 290 kHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF16 16 804.5 kHz</td>
<td>16 420 kHz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>