

HOW TO CALL MAYDAY

Understanding how to make a Mayday call is an essential part of being ready to crew any boat. Learning this important skill will save lives. There are certain steps that you should know in the event of an emergency to implement the Mayday procedure.

Stay Calm. Evaluate the situation. Understand that you are to make a Mayday call only if you are in a serious distress situation where there is an immediate or imminent threat to life or loss of property. This includes, fire, injury, the vessel taking on water, people fallen overboard, etc. When on your boat, the radio should be on and tuned to channel 16 even if there is no emergency.

Make the call. Press and hold the talk button and say Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, this is (your name) aboard the vessel (boat's name) BREAK. Release the talk button momentarily to insure that channel 16 is clear. Press the talk button and repeat your Mayday. Give the name of your vessel, your current position, speed, and bearing. For example, (position 54 25 north, 016 33 west, drifting at one knot with a bearing of 228 degrees.) We are a (sailboat, motorboat, etc.) experiencing (describe your emergency) and are in need of immediate assistance. There are (number of people aboard). Describe the boat, color, length, and anything else that might be helpful in identifying you quickly. If you don't have all of this information, it's okay. Give the information that you do have.

Wait for response. Let go of the talk button. If you do not hear a response within 15 seconds, repeat the entire Mayday call. While you are waiting for help to arrive, have all of your emergency equipment at hand....flares, life jackets, throw cushions, flashlights, etc.

DSC Calling. If you have a newer radio it most likely has a DSC (Digital Selective Calling) button. Lift the cover and hold the button until the radio "beeps". Your distress signal has been sent and the Coast Guard will call you on channel 16. Easy, right? Now, the bad part. To work properly, your DSC radio must be registered with the Coast Guard to receive a MMSI (Mobile Service Identify Number) and be connected to your GPS (chart plotter) unit. Using your DSC without the proper installation will send a distress signal without any identifying information. It would then be up to someone aboard to send a verbal Mayday as described above to contact the Coast Guard.

Mobile Phone. Your mobile phone is not a substitute for a marine VHS radio. Your phone is a narrowcast device and cannot broadcast your call for help. Don't take chances.....equip your boat with a VHF radio.