



PORTS AND YACHTING DIRECTORATE

LOCAL NOTICE TO MARINERS No 005 OF 2022

Our Ref: **TM/PYD/0001/22**

12 January 2022



Transport Malta

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Misuse of distress signals

The Ports and Yachting Directorate, Transport Malta, notifies that, in line with the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGS), as amended, all mariners should be familiar in the use and in the ability to recognise and relay when necessary 'Distress Signals'. All vessels shall, prior to their launch and use, be provided with adequate means of making effective distress signals by day and night.

The distress signals shall be used **ONLY** for the purpose of indicating distress at sea and the need of immediate assistance. The misuse of any signal, or the use of other signals which may be confused with any of the below, is **STRICTLY PROHIBITED**.

COLREGS Annex IV - Distress Signals is being reproduced below.

COLREGS 1972, as amended - Annex IV - Distress signals

1. The following signals, used or exhibited either together or separately, indicate distress and need of assistance:
 - a a gun or other explosive signal fired at intervals of about a minute;
 - b a continuous sounding with any fog signalling apparatus;
 - c rockets or shells, throwing red stars fired one at a time at short intervals;
 - d a signal made by any signalling method consisting of the group
●●● — — — ●●● (SOS) in the Morse Code;
 - e a signal sent by radiotelephony consisting of the spoken word "MAYDAY";
 - f the International Code Signal of distress indicated by N.C.;
 - g a signal consisting of a square flag having above or below it a ball or anything resembling a ball;
 - h flames on the vessel (as from a burning tar barrel, oil barrel, etc.);
 - i a rocket parachute flare or hand flare showing a red light;
 - j a smoke signal giving off orange-coloured smoke;
 - k slowly and repeatedly raising and lowering arms outstretched to each side.



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- l a distress alert by means of digital selective calling (DSC) transmitted on:
 - (i) VHF channel 70; or
 - (ii) MF/HF on the frequencies 2187.5 kHz, 8414.5 kHz, 4207.5 kHz, 6312 kHz, 12577 kHz or 16804.5 kHz;
 - m a ship-to-shore distress alert transmitted by the ship's Inmarsat or other mobile satellite service provider ship earth station;
 - n signals transmitted by emergency position indicating radio beacons;
 - o approved signals transmitted by radiocommunication systems, including survival craft radar transponders.
- 2 The use or exhibition of any of the foregoing signals except for the purpose of indicating distress and need of assistance and the use of other signals which may be confused with any of the above signals, is prohibited.
- 3 Attention is drawn to the relevant sections of the International Code of Signals, the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual, Volume III and the following signals:
- (a) a piece of orange coloured canvas with either a black square and circle or other appropriate symbol (for identification from the air);
 - (b) a dye marker.

In addition, the Ports and Yachting Directorate notifies that the use of any signals similar to, or the use of other signals which may be confused with, any of the above signals for reasons that **DO NOT** relate to indicating distress and the need for assistance, are to be pre-notified to the Authority in its functions of a Port Authority accordingly.

All mariners are reminded that the improper use of distress signals and failure to respond to or relay a distress signal is deemed as an offence and liable, upon conviction, to a fine (*multa*) or imprisonment or both.

Local Notice to Mariners No 093 of 2019 is hereby superseded