



Maritime and Coastguard Agency

MERCHANT SHIPPING NOTICE

**MSN 1816 (M+F)**

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## **Mandatory Registration of Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs)**

**Notice to all Owners, Masters and Skippers of vessels that carry EPIRBs**

*This notice replaces MSN 1732 (M+F) and MGN 302 (M+F).*

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### **PLEASE NOTE:-**

Where this document provides guidance on the law it should not be regarded as definitive. The way the law applies to any particular case can vary according to circumstances - for example, from vessel to vessel and you should consider seeking independent legal advice if you are unsure of your own legal position.

### **Summary**

This Notice draws attention to, and gives advice regarding *The Merchant Shipping (EPIRB Registration) Regulations 2000*.

Key Points –

- 406 MHz beacons (EPIRB or PLB) fitted to a United Kingdom vessel must be registered with the appropriate authority.
- Changes to registered beacons must also be notified.
- It is an offence by the Owner and/or the Operator not to follow these requirements.

## **1. Introduction/ Background**

1.1 This Notice is associated with The Merchant Shipping (EPIRB Registration) Regulations 2000. It draws attention to the requirements of those Regulations, namely the mandatory registration of all 406 MHz beacons carried on UK registered ships. The UK EPIRB register also accepts 406 MHz Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) used in a maritime environment.

1.2 The Regulations ensure that details held on the registers are as accurate as possible. There have been incidents where details were found to be wrong or out of date.

## **2. Need for accurate and timely registration details**

2.1 The effectiveness of a 406 MHz beacon as a Search and Rescue (SAR) aid depends upon correct registration details being available to the SAR services. If they are not, there is the potential to jeopardise SAR operations, including looking for the wrong vessel, or stopping a search because it might appear that the vessel with which the beacon is registered is not in distress.

### 3. Procedure for Registration

- 3.1 The beacon manufacturers normally provide two or more identical registration cards on which vessel operators should enter the required details, but these are also available from the Royal Yachting Association (Global Maritime Distress Safety System (GMDSS) Guidelines), Ofcom registration documentation and from the MCA via our website or the EPIRB Registry itself. One is to be returned to the manufacturer as a warranty, while another is sent to the competent authority. Any spare forms should be retained by the beacon owner.
- 3.2 Beacons that operate within the 406 MHz band must be registered with the MCA. The completed form or any registration queries should be sent to:

The EPIRB Registry  
The Maritime and Coastguard Agency  
MRCC Falmouth  
Castle Drive  
Pendennis Point  
Falmouth  
Cornwall TR11 4WZ

Tel: 01326 211569  
Fax: 01326 319264

Email: [epirb@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:epirb@mcga.gov.uk)

Online registration: <http://www.mcga.gov.uk/c4mca/epirb>

Office hours: Mon – Thurs: 08:45 – 16:45 Fri: 08:45 – 16:15

Outside office hours or in the case of an alert:

Falmouth Coastguard Operations room: Tel: 01326 317575

The beacon supplier or the EPIRB Registry will help you complete the card correctly if you need assistance.

To save time and resources a single point of contact should be registered by operators for all UK ships<sup>1</sup> that they operate.

### 4. Timescale

- 4.1 Once a registration card has been received by the Registry it is normal practice to process and enter the new or changed information the same day it is received. Confirmation should be received by the owner within 14 days.

### 5. Beacon Coding

- 5.1 The UK can only accept beacons coded using MID codes 232 233 234 or 235. Accepted UK protocols are:

UK Serialised – where the beacon has a unique serial number  
UK Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) – allocated to the vessel  
UK location protocols – for GPS models

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'ship' has the same meaning as in the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 section 313(1) namely that includes every description of vessel used in navigation.

Advice can be provided by the EPIRB Registry or the beacon manufacturer.

5.2 If information contained on the card is incorrect or we have a query, registration will be delayed. Ideally the owner will be contacted and the problem sorted as soon as possible; but this is not always the case where there are difficulties in making contact with vessel owners. Sometimes beacons need to be sent back to manufacturers or programmers for testing. It is advisable to check whether the beacon can be registered in good time prior to departure as difficulties may arise for vessels currently at sea.

5.3 If acknowledgement has not been received within three weeks the owner should contact the EPIRB Registry.

## **6. Hiring or Borrowing Beacons**

6.1 There are a number of Beacon hire companies, yacht delivery companies, programmer's spare service beacons and race competitors, who regularly change beacons from one vessel to another. This does not cause problems, provided the EPIRB Registry is notified of any changes of the registration details.

## **7. Proof of Registration**

7.1 Once registration details have been entered onto the Register, the following documents are sent to the owner which can be used as proof of registration:

- A covering letter;
- A printout of the entry;
- Two waterproof (proof of registration) 'sticky' labels; and
- A blank registration form

7.2 It is recommended that the printout is kept with the ships' documents as proof of registration and that the labels are attached to the beacon itself. (Note: labels should not be placed on the battery housing as this may be replaced during servicing.)

## **8. Change of Details**

8.1 The EPIRB Regulators will automatically contact all registered EPIRB holders every three years to check registration details. In the interim it is essential that any change(s) are notified to the Registry as in paragraph 3.2.

## **9. Offences**

9.1 The penalties are a fine not exceeding £1,000 for contraventions of Regulations 5(1) (requirement that the owner and operator correctly register any EPIRB carried on a ship) and 6 (requirement that the owner and operator notify the competent authority of any changes made with respect to a registered EPIRB) and £500 for contraventions of Regulation 5(3) (requirement that evidence of a correctly registered EPIRB carried on a ship is available on board for inspection at all times by a surveyor of ships.)

## More Information

Navigation Safety Branch  
Maritime and Coastguard Agency  
Bay 2/29  
Spring Place  
105 Commercial Road  
Southampton  
SO15 1EG

Tel : +44 (0) 23 8032 9356  
Fax : +44 (0) 23 8032 9204  
e-mail: [navigationsafety@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:navigationsafety@mcga.gov.uk)

General Inquiries: 24 Hour Infoline  
[infoline@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:infoline@mcga.gov.uk)  
0870 600 6505

MCA Website Address: [www.mcga.gov.uk](http://www.mcga.gov.uk)

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