

Federal Communications Commission

§ 80.317

DISTRESS, ALARM, URGENCY AND
SAFETY PROCEDURES

§ 80.311 Authority for distress transmission.

A mobile station in distress may use any means at its disposal to attract attention, make known its position, and obtain help. A distress call and message, however, must be transmitted only on the authority of the master or person responsible for the mobile station. No person shall knowingly transmit, or cause to be transmitted, any false or fraudulent signal of distress or related communication.

§ 80.312 Priority of distress transmissions.

The distress call has absolute priority over all other transmissions. All stations which hear it must immediately cease any transmission capable of interfering with the distress traffic and must continue to listen on the frequency used for the emission of the distress call. This call must not be addressed to a particular station. Acknowledgement of receipt must not be given before the distress message which follows it is sent.

§ 80.313 Frequencies for use in distress.

The frequencies specified in the bands below are for use by mobile stations in distress. The conventional emission is shown. When a ship station cannot transmit on the designated frequency or the conventional emission, it may use any available frequency or emission. Frequencies for distress and safety calling using digital selective calling techniques are listed in § 80.359(b). Distress and safety NB-DP frequencies are indicated by footnote 2 in § 80.361(b).

Frequency band	Emission	Carrier frequency
1615–3500 kHz	J3E	2182 kHz.
118–136 MHz ..	A3E	121.500 MHz.
156–162 MHz ..	F3E, PON	156.800 MHz 156.750 MHz.
243 MHz	A3N	243.000 MHz.

The maximum transmitter power obtainable may be used.

[51 FR 31213, Sept. 2, 1986; 51 FR 34984, Oct. 1, 1986; 68 FR 46968, Aug. 7, 2003; 73 FR 4485, Jan. 25, 2008]

§ 80.314 Distress communications.

(a) The international radiotelephone distress signal consists of the word MAYDAY, pronounced as the French expression ‘m’aider’.

(b) These distress signals indicate that a mobile station is threatened by grave and imminent danger and requests immediate assistance.

(c) The radiotelephone distress call consists of:

- (1) The distress signal MAYDAY spoken three times;
 - (2) The words THIS IS;
 - (3) The call sign (or name, if no call sign assigned) of the mobile station in distress, spoken three times;
 - (4) Particulars of the station’s position;
 - (5) The nature of the distress;
 - (6) The kind of assistance desired; and
 - (7) Any other information which might facilitate rescue, for example, the length, color, and type of vessel, or number of persons on board.
- (d) The procedures for canceling false distress alerts are contained in § 80.335.

[51 FR 31213, Sept. 2, 1986, as amended at 68 FR 46968, Aug. 7, 2003; 73 FR 4485, Jan. 25, 2008]

§ 80.317 Radiotelegraph and radiotelephone alarm signals.

(a) The international radiotelegraph alarm signal consists of a series of twelve dashes sent in one minute, the duration of each dash being four seconds and the duration of the interval between consecutive dashes one second. The purpose of this special signal is the actuation of automatic devices giving the alarm to attract the attention of the operator when there is no listening watch on the distress frequency.

(b) The international radiotelephone alarm signal consists of two substantially sinusoidal audio frequency tones transmitted alternately. One tone must have a frequency of 2200 Hertz and the other a frequency of 1300 Hertz, the duration of each tone being 250 milliseconds. When generated by automatic means, the radiotelephone alarm signal must be transmitted continuously for a period of at least 30 seconds, but not exceeding one minute; when generated by other means, the signal must be transmitted as continuously

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as practicable over a period of approximately one minute. The purpose of this special signal is to attract the attention of the person on watch or to actuate automatic devices giving the alarm.

§ 80.318 Use of alarm signals.

(a) The radiotelegraph or radiotelephone alarm signal, as appropriate, must only be used to announce:

- (1) That a distress call or message is about to follow;
- (2) The transmission of an urgent cyclone warning. In this case the alarm signal may only be used by coast stations authorized by the Commission to do so; or
- (3) The loss of a person or persons overboard. In this case the alarm signal may only be used when the assistance of other ships is required and cannot be satisfactorily obtained by the use of the urgency signal only, but the alarm signal must not be repeated by other stations. The message must be preceded by the urgency signal.

(b) In cases described in paragraphs (a)(2) and (3) of this section, the transmission of the warning or message by radiotelegraphy must not begin until two minutes after the end of the radiotelegraph alarm signal.

§ 80.319 Radiotelegraph distress call and message transmission procedure.

(a) The radiotelegraph distress procedure consists of the following six steps; however, when time is vital, the first and second steps may be omitted. These two steps of the distress procedure may also be omitted in circumstances when transmission of the alarm signal is considered unnecessary:

- (1) The radiotelegraph alarm signal;
- (2) The distress call and an interval of two minutes;
- (3) The distress call;
- (4) The distress message;
- (5) Two dashes of ten to fifteen seconds each;
- (6) The call sign of the mobile station in distress.

(b) The radiotelegraph distress transmissions must be sent by means of the international Morse code at a speed not exceeding 16 words per minute nor less than 8 words per minute.

(c) The distress message, preceded by the distress call, must be repeated at intervals until an answer is received. The radiotelegraph alarm signal may also be repeated, if necessary.

(d) The transmissions under paragraphs (a) (5) and (6) of this section, which are to permit direction finding stations to determine the position of the station in distress, may be repeated at frequent intervals if necessary.

(e) When the mobile station in distress receives no answer to a distress message transmitted on the distress frequency, the message may be repeated on any other available frequency on which attention might be attracted.

[51 FR 31213, Sept. 2, 1986, as amended at 69 FR 64674, Nov. 8, 2004]

§ 80.320 Radiotelephone distress call and message transmission procedure.

(a) The radiotelephone distress procedure consists of:

- (1) The radiotelephone alarm signal (whenever possible);
- (2) The distress call;
- (3) The distress message.

(b) The DSC distress procedure consists of:

- (1) Transmission by a mobile unit in distress;
- (2) Reception;
- (3) Acknowledgement of distress calls;
- (4) Distress relays.

(c) Radiotelephone distress transmissions must be made slowly and distinctly, each word being clearly pronounced to facilitate transcription.

(d) After the transmission by radiotelephony of its distress message, the mobile station may be requested to transmit suitable signals followed by its call sign or name, to permit direction-finding stations to determine its position. This request may be repeated at frequent intervals if necessary.

(e) The distress message, preceded by the distress call, must be repeated at intervals until an answer is received. This repetition must be preceded by the radiotelephone alarm signal whenever possible.

(f) When the mobile station in distress receives no answer to a distress message transmitted on the distress