

Federal Communications Commission

§ 80.319

§ 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

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.

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(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

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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]

§ 80.321 Acknowledgement of receipt of distress message.

(a) Stations of the maritime mobile service which receive a distress message from a mobile station which is beyond any possible doubt in their vicinity must immediately acknowledge receipt. However, in areas where reliable communication with one or more coast stations is practicable, ship stations may defer this acknowledgement for a short interval so that a coast station may acknowledge receipt.

(b) Stations of the maritime mobile service which receive a distress message from a mobile station which is beyond any possible doubt is not in their vicinity, must allow a short interval of time to elapse before acknowledging receipt of the message in order to permit stations nearer to the mobile station in distress to acknowledge receipt without interference.

§ 80.322 Form of acknowledgement.

(a) The acknowledgement of receipt of a radiotelegraph distress message is transmitted in the following form:

- (1) The distress signal SOS;
- (2) The call sign of the station sending the distress message, sent three times;
- (3) The word DE;
- (4) The call sign of the station acknowledging receipt, sent three times;
- (5) The group RRR;
- (6) The message signal SOS.

(b) The acknowledgement of receipt of a radiotelephone distress message is transmitted in the following form:

- (1) The distress signal MAYDAY;
- (2) The call sign or other identification of the station sending the distress message, spoken three times;
- (3) The words THIS IS;
- (4) The call sign or other identification of the station acknowledging receipt, spoken three times;
- (5) The word RECEIVED;
- (6) The distress signal MAYDAY.