INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION
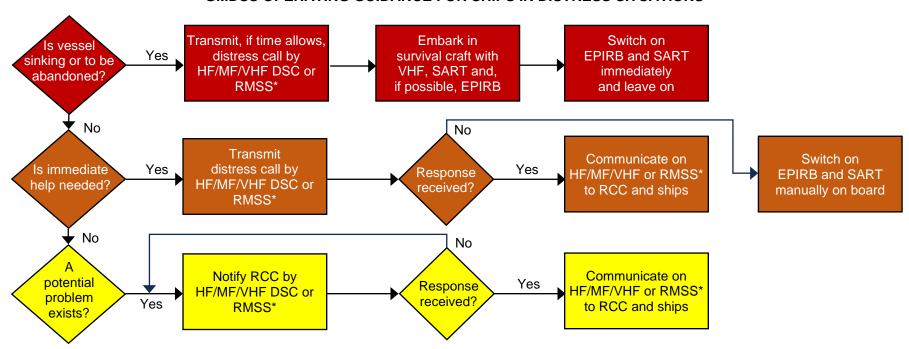
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MSC.1/Circ.1656[*]
28 November 2022

GMDSS OPERATING GUIDANCE FOR SHIPS IN DISTRESS SITUATIONS

1   The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 106th session (2 to 11 November 2022), approved the revised *GMDSS operating guidance for ships in distress situations*, as set out in the annex, prepared by the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR), at its ninth session (21 to 30 June 2022).

2   This circular provides guidance concerning the use of appropriate radiocommunication equipment in distress situations, in accordance with chapter IV of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974. The Guidance in the annex is recommended to be displayed on ships' bridges as an A4 size poster.

3   Member Governments are invited to bring the annexed Guidance to the attention of seafarers and all other parties concerned.

4   This circular becomes effective on 1 January 2024, superseding COM/Circ.108 as from that date.

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[*]   This circular was reissued on 14 November 2024 to apply an editorial correction to the diagram in the annex (i.e. the shape of the question "A potential problem exists?" was changed from a rectangular to a diamond shape).

NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR GREENER SHIPPING

ANNEX

GMDSS OPERATING GUIDANCE FOR SHIPS IN DISTRESS SITUATIONS

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┌─────────────┐
│ Is vessel   │  Yes  ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│ sinking or  │─────▶ │ Transmit, if     │──▶│ Embark in        │──▶│ Switch on        │
│ to be       │       │ time allows,     │   │ survival craft   │   │ EPIRB and SART   │
│ abandoned?  │       │ distress call by │   │ with VHF, SART   │   │ immediately      │
└─────────────┘       │ HF/MF/VHF DSC or │   │ and, if possible,│   │ and leave on     │
      │ No            │ RMSS*            │   │ EPIRB            │   └──────────────────┘
      ▼               └──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘
┌─────────────┐                                        No
│ Is immediate│  Yes  ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│ help        │─────▶ │ Transmit         │──▶│ Response     │─Yes▶│ Communicate on  │──▶│ Switch on        │
│ needed?     │       │ distress call by │   │ received?    │   │ HF/MF/VHF or     │   │ EPIRB and SART   │
└─────────────┘       │ HF/MF/VHF DSC or │   └──────────────┘   │ RMSS* to RCC     │   │ manually on board│
      │ No            │ RMSS*            │                       │ and ships        │   └──────────────────┘
      ▼               └──────────────────┘                      └──────────────────┘
┌─────────────┐                                        No
│ A potential │  Yes  ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│ problem     │─────▶ │ Notify RCC by    │──▶│ Response     │─Yes▶│ Communicate on  │
│ exists?     │       │ HF/MF/VHF DSC or │   │ received?    │   │ HF/MF/VHF or     │
└─────────────┘       │ RMSS*            │   └──────────────┘   │ RMSS* to RCC     │
                      └──────────────────┘                      │ and ships        │
                                                                └──────────────────┘
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* Recognized mobile satellite service

1. EPIRB should float free and activate automatically if it cannot be taken into survival craft.

2. Where necessary, ships should use any appropriate means to alert other ships.

3. Nothing above is intended to preclude the use of any and all available means of distress alerting, including those listed in COLREG 72, annex IV.

Frequencies for Distress Communications		
	Digital selective calling (DSC)	Radiotelephone
VHF	Channel 70	Channel 16
MF	2 187.5 kHz	2 182 kHz
HF4	4 207.5 kHz	4 125 kHz
HF6	6 312.0 kHz	6 215 kHz
HF8	8 414.5 kHz	8 291 kHz
HF12	12 577.0 kHz	12 290 kHz
HF16	16 804.5 kHz	16 420 kHz

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