

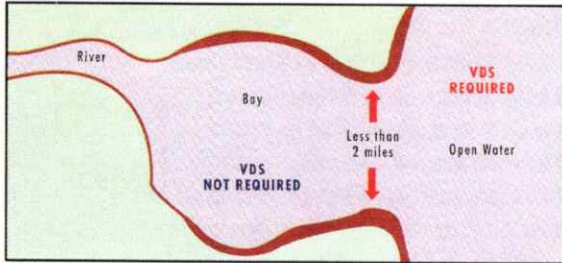
Saved by the Signal



- Visual Distress Signals Allow Boaters to Signal for Help
- Signals Must Be Coast Guard Approved
- For Pyrotechnics, A Minimum Of Three Are Required Which Have Not Expired

Coast Guard Visual Distress Signal Requirements

All vessels used on coastal waters, the Great lakes, territorial seas, and those waters connected directly to them, up to a point where a body of water is less than two miles wide, must be equipped with U.S.C.G. Approved visual distress signals. Vessels owned in the United States operating on the high seas must be equipped with U.S.C.G. Approved visual distress signals.



These vessels are not required to carry day signals but must carry night signals when operating from sunset to sunrise:

- Recreational boats less than 16 feet in length
- Boats participating in organized events such as races, regattas, or marine parades.
- Open sailboats less than 26 feet in length not equipped with propulsion machinery.
- Manually propelled boats.

Pyrotechnic Devices

Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals must be Coast Guard Approved, in serviceable condition, and readily accessible.

- They are marked with an expiration date. Expired signals may be carried as extra equipment, but can not be counted toward meeting the visual distress signal requirement, since they may be unreliable.
- Launchers manufactured before January 1, 1981, intended for use with approved signals, are not required to be Coast Guard Approved.
- If pyrotechnic devices are selected a minimum of three are required. That is, three signals for day use and three signals for night. Some pyrotechnic signals meet both day and night use requirements.
- A watertight container painted red or orange and prominently marked "DISTRESS SIGNALS" or "FLARES" is recommended.

Non-Pyrotechnic Devices

Non-Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals must be in serviceable condition, readily accessible, and certified by the manufacturer as complying with U.S.C.G. requirements. They include:

Orange Distress Flag

- Day signal only.
- Must be at least 3 x 3 feet with a black square and ball on an orange background.
- Must be marked with an indication that it meets Coast Guard requirements in 46 CFR 160.072
- Most distinctive when attached and waved on a paddle, boathook, or flown from a mast.
- May also be incorporated as part of devices designed to attract attention in an emergency, such as balloons, kites, or floating streamers.

Electric Distress Light

- Accepted for night use only
- Automatically flashes the international SOS distress signal (...---...)
- Must be marked with an indication that it meets Coast Guard requirements in 46 CFR 161.013.

Under Inland Navigation Rules, a high intensity white light flashing at regular intervals from 50-70 times per minute is considered a distress signal. Such devices do NOT count toward meeting the visual distress signal requirement, however.

Regulations prohibit display of visual distress signals on the water under any circumstances except when assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons on board a vessel.

All distress signals have distinct advantages and disadvantages. No single device is ideal under all conditions or suitable for all purposes. Pyrotechnics are universally recognized as excellent distress signals. However, there is potential for injury and property damage if not properly handled. These devices produce a very hot flame and the residue can cause burns and ignite flammable materials.

We recommend all launchers and signals be checked each year prior to the boating season to be sure they are in good working order.

Pistol launched and hand-held parachute flares and meteors have many characteristics of a firearm and must be handled with caution. In some states they are considered a firearm and prohibited from use.

How Do I Know If a Signal Meets The Coast Guard Requirements?

Only visual distress signals marked with a U.S. Coast Guard approval or certification number meet the Coast Guard requirements.

Will My Visual Distress Signals Expire?

Pyrotechnic signaling devices (including aerial flares and hand-held signals) expire 42 months after the date of manufacture in accordance with the Coast Guard requirements. Typically, this means that you must replace your flares every three boating seasons. The Coast Guard regulations require that each pyrotechnic signaling device must be stamped with the expiration date. Accordingly, check the expiration dates on your flares and signals as shown below. If they have expired or will expire during the boating season, you must replace them.



Disposal

To dispose of expired marine pyrotechnic distress signals, Orion recommends the following methods:

- Ignite hand-held signal flares on land in a safe area, much the same as highway flares would be ignited.
- Contact a local law enforcement or fire protection agency for their advice on proper visual distress signal disposal.
- Retain flares for back-up use to expand signaling time in the event of an emergency.

NEVER jettison visual distress signals overboard.

NEVER activate marine flares in a non-emergency situation.

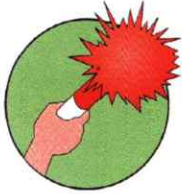
NEVER dispose of flares in household trash.

What Types of Visual Distress Signals Have Been Accepted By The Coast Guard?

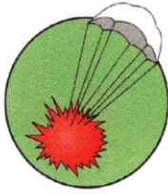
The following are just a few of the variety and combination of devices which can be carried in order to meet the requirements:

- Three Hand-held red flares (day and night) .
- One hand-held red flare and two parachute flares (day and night).
- One hand-held orange smoke signal, two floating orange smoke signals (day) and one electric distress light (night only).

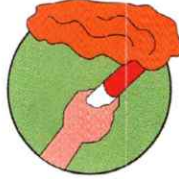
Pyrotechnic Device Examples



Red Flare
(hand-held/day and night)
Minimum burn time:
2 minutes, 500 candela



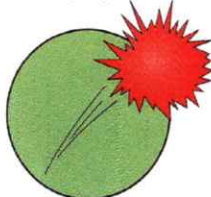
Parachute Flare
(day and night)
Minimum burn time:
30 seconds, 20,000 candela



Orange Smoke Signal
(hand-held/day only)
Minimum burn time:
50 seconds

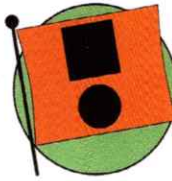


Floating Orange Smoke Signal
(day only)
Minimum burn time:
4 minutes

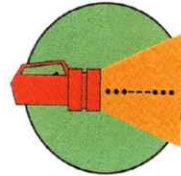


Red Meteor
(day and night)
Minimum burn time:
5.5 seconds, 10,000 candela

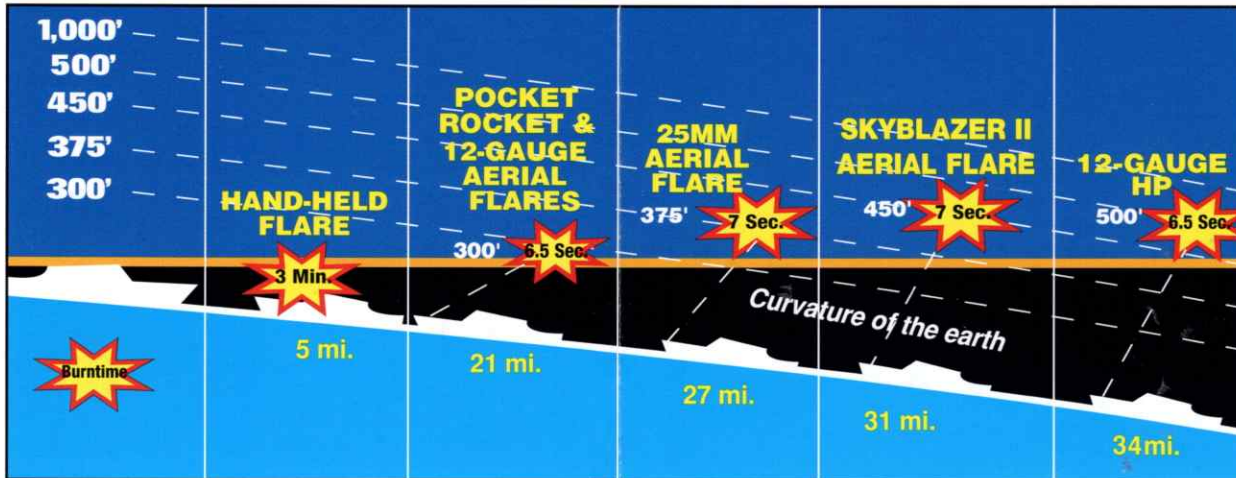
Non-Pyrotechnic Device Examples



Orange Flag
(day only)
Minimum 36" square Red-Orange back with
black disc and square printed both sides



Electric Distress Signals
(night only)
Automatically Flashes
SOS Distress Signal



Annual Signal Inspection

Before each boating season check that your signals are not expired or due to expire during the boating season, if they are replace immediately.

Test Your Launcher

We recommend all launchers be checked each year prior to the boating season to be sure it is fully functional, to do so:

1. BE SURE THE FIRING PIN IS NOT COCKED.
2. Open the barrel and slide a 12-Gauge Orion signal into the barrel.
3. Check that the signal is fully inserted into the barrel.
4. Close the barrel.

If the barrel fully closes and snaps shut, your launcher is in good operating order. Open the barrel and REMOVE THE SIGNAL AND SAFELY STORE IT WITH YOUR OTHER SIGNALS.

If the barrel does not fully close, DO NOT FORCE IT, check that the signal is pushed all the way into the barrel. If this does not help, REMOVE THE SIGNAL AND SAFELY STORE IT WITH YOUR OTHER SIGNALS. Contact the manufacturer for replacement instructions.

Check Your Hand Signals

Check that moisture, mishandling, or improper storage has not corrupted the flare body. Flares are waterproof but extreme conditions can have a negative impact on their performance and shelf life.

ACQUAINT YOURSELF WITH YOUR SIGNALS OPERATION

Prior to each season read the instructions on all your signals. You want to be prepared in an emergency to deploy your signals when needed.

STORAGE

All signals should be stored in a safe, dry, readily accessible location on your boat. You should make family members and visiting boaters aware of the location, and use of all your safety gear.

Safety Check List

Before you go boating this season be sure you check all of the following items and call your local Power Squadron or Coast Guard Auxiliary for Vessel Safety Check.

<input type="checkbox"/> COAST GUARD APPROVED FLARES
Always carry aerials and handheld. Replace expired flares.
<input type="checkbox"/> FIRE EXTINGUISHER
When required: Must be USCG Approved. Marine Type in good, serviceable condition, properly charged. Correct number aboard for the size and type of vessel.
<input type="checkbox"/> LIFE JACKETS
Must be Coast Guard approved. One wearable life jacket for each person aboard and a throwable device when required; correct size, condition and readily accessible. (The Coast Guard recommends always wearing a life jacket when underway. Children under 13 life jacket must be worn) Whistle for each vest.
<input type="checkbox"/> FIRST AID KITS
Based on how and where you boat choose a kit that will handle most minor emergencies.
<input type="checkbox"/> SIGNALING DEVICES
All vessels are required to carry a sound signaling device. Whistles, air horns and replacement air, should be aboard all boats. Required in fog and can be used for signaling bridges, and as an emergency signaling device.
<input type="checkbox"/> ANCHOR AND ANCHOR LINE
Replace worn lines. Lines should be at least 5 to 7 times the depth of the water. Use anchor chain to attach anchor to line.



ORION is a supporter of The USCG Auxiliary
Recreational Boating Safety Programs.

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