

Safety Equipment

Distress Beacons

Marine Safety



When to activate

EPIRBs and PLBs should only be activated when there is an emergency situation and a person believes they are in imminent danger or when they are told to do so by a rescue authority.

In the event of an emergency, also consider initial communications with others close by using radios and other signalling devices.



EPIRBs and PLBs should only be activated when you are in imminent danger.

Accidental activation

If a distress beacon is activated by accident, the most important thing to do is to turn it off and let AMSA know as soon as possible on free call **1800 641 792** or free call WA Water Police on **131 444** or contact your nearest marine rescue group.

Unauthorised use of distress beacons

Distress beacons have a very serious purpose. Falsely indicating distress rightly carries a severe penalty, but it also wastes a lot of time and resources – possibly weakening the ability to respond to a genuine emergency.

When you are not using your boat, removing your safety equipment and giving it secure storage will help prevent unauthorised use.

Testing

Regularly use the test switch as per the manufacturer's user manual to check it's still in working condition.



Regularly use the test switch to check your distress beacon is in working condition.

Storage

Store EPIRBs in an accessible place where they can be retrieved easily but away from areas where they might be knocked or accidentally activated. Ensure the EPIRB container is not cracked or showing signs of damage and all on board know where it is and how to activate it.



Store distress beacons in an accessible place .

Disposal of unwanted distress beacons

EPIRBs need to be disposed of responsibly to avoid accidental activation. Distress beacons must not be disposed of in general waste as they could end up in landfill and be inadvertently activated.

Check the beacon manufacturer's instructions, they may provide instructions on how to disconnect the beacon battery. Once disconnected, contact your local waste management facility to ask about disposing of your unwanted beacon in an environmentally friendly way. A small fee may apply.

Unwanted EPIRBs can be:

- Handed in for safe disposal at Marine Operations, 14 Capo D'Orlando Drive, Fremantle.
- Left in marked bins at Battery World stores around Australia, (disposal fees may apply).
- Disarmed by following the manufacturer's instructions.

GPS enabled EPIRBs and PLBs



Distress beacons

A distress beacon is an electronic transmitter you can use to alert rescuers that you are in a life threatening situation and need to be rescued. Lives are saved when skippers carry beacons.

All vessels, both registrable and non registrable, must carry a compliant distress beacon if proceeding more than 400 metres from the shore in unprotected waters in WA.

A **Personal Locator Beacon** (PLB) may be carried in lieu of an **Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon** (EPIRB), provided the PLB is worn by at least one person on board the vessel at all times when operating more than 400 metres from shore in unprotected waters in WA.

Beacon types

Choose a beacon that is suitable to your vessel and activity.

EPIRBs are designed for marine use, will float and keep the antennae above the water, (have a lanyard to secure it to something that's not going to sink) and can operate continuously for 48 hours.



An EPIRB is designed to float in water.

PLBs are smaller portable beacons that are designed to be worn or carried by an individual. Some PLBs do not float and may not be designed for use in water, so take care to choose one that is. A PLB usually has a shorter battery life than an EPIRB and will only operate for approximately 24 hours.

In WA an EPIRB or PLB is required but the PLB must be worn by someone on board at all times when operating more than 400 metres from shore in unprotected waters.



A PLB must be worn by at least one person on board

Compliant distress beacons

To be approved for marine use an EPIRB or PLB must display the following standards.

EPIRB
(AS/NZS 4280.1)

PLBs
(AS/NZS 4280.2)

To be compliant a distress beacon must also be registered with Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and have an in-date battery.

Battery expiry

The distress beacon battery is required by law to be in-date. If it expires, replace the unit with a new one from a supplier.

If your distress beacon battery has expired the distress beacon is non-compliant and it may not work in an emergency.



If the battery date stamp has expired the distress beacon is non-compliant.

Register your distress beacon

You must register your 406MHz EPIRB or PLB distress beacon with AMSA.

Registration is a free and simple online process via www.amsa.gov.au/beacons

Registration gives AMSA vital information to assist in a rescue.

AMSA no longer issues stickers as proof of beacon registration. Vessel owners who are required to carry a registered beacon must provide proof of beacon registration using one of the following methods:

- Carry a printed copy of your email registration confirmation.
- Save your registration confirmation on your phone.
- Provide proof of your registration via the new AMSA mobile phone beacon system.

Update your details

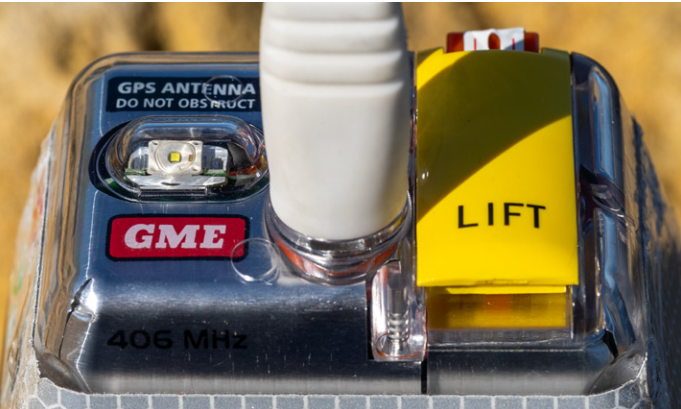
If your registration details change (phone number, address, bought a new boat, etc.) you must update them.

To change your details visit the AMSA website, email ausbeacon@amsa.gov.au or phone 1800 406 406.

Global Positioning System (GPS) used in distress beacons

A GPS enabled distress beacon will provide rescuers with a signal to a location accuracy of 120 metres and the satellite detection time is greatly reduced.

Similar to GPS beacons, Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) devices must meet the AS/NZS 4280.1 standard and comply with distress beacon requirements.



GPS antenna need to have a clear view of the sky

Non-GPS distress beacons, which are being phased out over a five year period, have a location accuracy of five kilometres and requires a number of passing satellites to detect and pinpoint your location.

NON-GPS
Accuracy:
5 kilometres

GPS
Accuracy
120 metres

Contact details

Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure
Email: Ed.Boat@transport.wa.gov.au
Website: www.transport.wa.gov.au/imagine
Marine Safety Hotline: 13 11 56

Police
Emergency: 000
Water Police: 9442 8600

Boating Weather Forecasts
Boating weather: 1300 815 916
Website: www.bom.gov.au

Boating in WA just got smarter.
Download the free Deckee app.

DoT Direct anywhere, anytime!
Save time and go online today

Join us at
facebook.com/MarineSafetyWA

For further information go to
transport.wa.gov.au/imagine/distress-beacons.asp
or scan the QR code