ZULU MARINER DATA CARD

9 DISTRESS SIGNALS

COLREGs Annex IV. Any one of these, used together or apart, means I am in distress and need help.



Red parachute rocket or red hand flare
Day or night. Hold the hand flare downwind, over the side.



Orange smoke
Day only. Let it off downwind.



Slowly raising and lowering outstretched arms
The small-boat signal everyone should know.



EPIRB or PLB, satellite alerts and approved radio signals
Including Inmarsat alerts and a SART. Register your beacon with AMSA.

DSC

DSC distress alert
VHF channel 70, MF or HF. Then MAYDAY by voice.

MAYDAY

MAYDAY by radio telephone
On VHF 16, or any frequency.

SOS

SOS by any method
Light, sound or radio: ...---...



Flags N over C
International Code of Signals.



A square flag with a ball above or below it
Anything square and anything round.



Flames on the vessel
From a burning tar or oil barrel.



Rockets or shells throwing red stars
Fired one at a time at short intervals.



A gun or explosive signal about every minute



Continuous sounding of any fog-signal apparatus



Orange canvas with a black square and circle
For aircraft to see. A dye marker also helps.

USING FLARES WELL

- Check the use-by date. Store them dry, where you can reach them fast.
- Do not fire until a vessel or aircraft could see it, or you hear one.
- Hand flares: wear gloves, hold at arm's length downwind, never look at it.
- Misusing a distress signal is an offence.

WHICH SIGNAL, WHEN?

SIGNAL	DAY	NIGHT	CLOSE	FAR
Red hand flare	✓	✓	✓	–
Red parachute rocket	✓	✓	✓	✓
Orange smoke	✓	–	✓	–
EPIRB or PLB	✓	✓	✓	✓
VHF MAYDAY / DSC	✓	✓	✓	✓
Waving arms	✓	–	✓	–
Torch: SOS	–	✓	✓	–

Carry more than one kind. A beacon gets them looking; a flare or smoke shows them exactly where you are.

Study aid only. Not for navigation.
Check the current official rules. Card 9 · v1.7 · © Nautical Bridge