

30 Emergency Position Indicating Radiobeacons (EPIRBs) on Ships

1 Regulations

- 1.1 *Regulations concerning the carriage of emergency position indicating radiobeacons (EPIRBs) have been in effect since October 25, 1989. The carriage requirements for the Class I (float-free) and Class II (Survival craft) EPIRB are contained in the Ship Station (Radio) Regulations. In addition to the carriage requirements, there are technical requirements that every EPIRB must meet and important testing and inspection requirements. EPIRBs may be either the 406 MHz COSPAS-SARSAT. These requirements are provided by the Ship Station (Radio) Technical Regulations.*

2 Application

- 2.1 A ship that is not a tug shall be equipped with an EPIRB
- (a) in the case of a ship that is 20 m or more in length and engaged on a voyage other than a home-trade voyage, Class IV, or a minor waters voyage;
 - (b) in the case of a ship that has a gross tonnage of 15 tons or more, is less than 20 m in length and is engaged on a home-trade voyage, Class I, a home-trade voyage, Class II, or a foreign voyage; and
 - (c) in the case of a ship that has a gross tonnage of less than 15 tons, is 8 m or more in length and is engaged on a home-trade voyage, Class I, a home-trade voyage, Class II, or a foreign voyage.
- 2.2 A tug that has a gross tonnage of more than five tons shall be equipped with an EPIRB if the tug is engaged on a voyage other than
- (a) a home-trade voyage, Class IV;
 - (b) a minor waters voyage; or
 - (c) in the case of a tug that is less than 20 m in length, a voyage of not more than 50 miles during which the tug remains within either
 - (i) two miles of shore, or
 - (ii) 20 miles of the nearest place of refuge.
- 2.3 An EPIRB required by these Regulations shall be located on board a ship in a manner and in a place that would allow it
- (a) in the case of a ship that has a gross tonnage of 15 tons or more or a tug, to float free should the ship sink;
 - (b) to be readily accessible near the position from which the ship is normally navigated, unless it can be activated by remote control from that position; and
 - (c) to be manually released and carried into a survival craft.

3 Voluntary Carriage

- 3.1 The Canadian Coast Guard encourages the voluntary carriage of approved Class I EPIRB on all vessels that are not required to carry this equipment.

4 Type Approvals

- 4.1 406 MHz COSPAS-SARSAT EPIRBs carried on board Canadian vessels must be type approved. To receive Canadian type approval, 406 MHz COSPAS-SARSAT EPIRBs must comply with the performance standards of the Department of Transport, COSPAS-SARSAT and the radio standards specifications of Industry Canada.

Your EPIRB and SAR services

The International Cospas-Sarsat System will cease satellite processing of 121.5/243 MHz beacons from February 1st, 2009. All beacon owners and users should begin taking steps to replace their 121.5/243 MHz beacons with 406 MHz beacons as soon as possible. A good time to consider purchasing a 406 MHz beacon is when the battery on your 121.5 MHz beacon needs replacing. Typically, batteries need replacing about every five years. The sooner you upgrade, the better the service the Cospas-Sarsat System can provide should your beacon be activated in a distress event.

Beginning in 2009, only 406 MHz beacons will be detected by the Cospas-Sarsat satellite system. This affects all maritime beacons (EPIRBs), all aviation beacons (ELTs) and all personal beacons (PLBs).

You sell or give up your 406 Mhz beacon? Do not forget to amend the Canadian Beacon Registry (CBR), your identity is related to the beacon. Contact CBR at:

Canadian Beacon Registry
CFB Trenton, PO Box 1000 Stn Forces
Astra, ON, K0K 3W0
Telephone: 1-877-406-SOS1 (7671)
Fax: 1-877-406-FAX8 (3298)
Website: https://www.cbr-rcb.ca/cbr/presentation/other_autre/contact_contacter.php?lang=en
E-mail: CBR@sarnet.dnd.ca

Mariners should check with INMARSAT for exchange of any currently held INMARSAT 'E' EPRIBs. Further, mariners should only purchase and fit COSPAS-SARSAT 406 MHz EPRIBs in preparation for the discontinuation of the INMARSAT 'E' EPRIB service.

5 Emergency Beacon Registries

- 5.1 Every 406 MHz COSPAS-SARSAT and EPIRB is required to have a registration card included with the EPIRB, as part of the type approval process. Furthermore, the *Ship Station (Radio) Technical Regulations* require vessel owners to register each beacon.
- 5.2 These registries contain information about the beacon, the vessel it is on and the person who owns the beacon. This information is used for search and rescue purposes and will greatly assist in the speedy resolution of any beacon alarm incident. The responsibility of ensuring the accuracy of registry data rests with the beacon owner. Since lives may depend on this information, it is in the owner's best interests to ensure the initial and continuing accuracy of registered information.
- 5.3 406 MHz COSPAS-SARSAT EPIRBs must be registered with the Canadian Beacon Registry.

6 Safe Transportation

- 6.1 The power source for 406 MHz COSPAS-SARSAT EPIRBs is a long-life lithium battery. There are federal and provincial regulations governing the transportation of equipment containing these batteries, by land, sea or air.
- 6.2 Users should consult an EPIRB agent, a transportation company or the appropriate government transportation authority for guidance prior to the shipment of an EPIRB for any purpose other than normal use.

7 Warning

- 7.1 Investigations by the Canadian Coast Guard have determined that the Class 1 float-free, 406 MHz COSPAS-SARSAT EPIRB on board some vessels have not been properly installed or armed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Such equipment would therefore not function automatically in an emergency situation. It is imperative that mariners ensure that this float-free EPIRB is properly installed on board their vessel and set for automatic operation.

8 Maintenance

- 8.1 Users should ensure that EPIRBs are tested every six months in accordance with the *Ship Station (Radio) Technical Regulations*.
- 8.2 Users should read all instructions carefully and refer to the user manual for the manufacturer's recommendations on periodic maintenance.

9 False Alarms

- 9.1 In order to minimize the impact on SAR resources, in the event of accidental activation of an EPIRB, SAR authorities request that users:
 - .1 deactivate the beacon by turning the switch from ON to ARMED (or SAFE) position in certain models; and,
 - .2 call the Canadian Mission Control Centre at 1-800-211-8107 or (613) 965-7265 or the nearest JRCC/MRSC office to report the situation.

Authority: Canadian Coast Guard (Search and Rescue, Ottawa)