



Aquatic Consulting Services

356 Sumner Ave. • P.O. Box 1418 • Avalon • California • 90704
Santa Catalina Island • (619) 602-4435 • alison@alisonosinski.com

Boating Tip #3: Mayday & Other Distress Calls

Mayday

- Don't send a "mayday" distress call unless it is a life and death situation or unless you are in imminent danger
- Switch the VHF to high power
- Tune to Channel 16
- Press the alarm signal for 30 seconds
- Press the button and say "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday"
- This is the sailing yacht _____ – repeat the vessel name 3 times
- Say "Mayday: (vessel name) _____"
- Our location is _____ (give latitude and longitude, distance from a well-known landmark, course, speed, destination)
- We are (nature of distress)
- We require (nature of assistance)
- We have _____ persons on board
- The injured person is (condition)
- We are a _____ - foot, _____ (make) _____ (model), _____ (length), _____ (type of boat)
- Our hull color is _____ with a _____ stripe
- Our sail color is _____
- I will be listening on Channel 16. This is _____ (vessel name)
- Say "Over", and take your finger off the button
- Listen for a response
- Repeat as many times as necessary until someone responds

Pan

- Pronounced "pahn"
- If you need medical assistance, but not medical evacuation, start your distress call on channel 16 by saying "Pan, Pan, Pan"
- This is the sailing yacht _____ -- repeat the vessel name 3 times
- Say "Pan: : (vessel name) _____"
- Our location is _____ (give latitude and longitude, distance from a well-known landmark, course, speed, destination)
- We require (nature of assistance)

- We have _____ persons on board
- The injured person is (condition)
- We are a _____ - foot, _____ (make), _____ (model), _____ (length), _____ (type of boat)
- Our hull color is _____ with a _____ stripe
- Our sail color is _____
- I will be listening on Channel 16. This is _____ (vessel name)
- Say “Over”, and take your finger off the button
- Listen for a response
- Repeat as many times as necessary until someone responds

Private Towing Companies

- If it is not an emergency, but you need assistance, call a private towing company instead of the U.S. Coast Guard
- You can call the towing company on the cell phone or use the VHF radio channel 16

Vessel Assist	(800) 391-4869
Sea Tow	(888) 473-2869

- Private towing companies are like AAA for boaters. You join annually for a reasonable fee and are covered while aboard your boat or someone else’s vessel.
- Start a VHF call on channel 16 and say, for example, “Vessel Assist, Vessel Assist, Vessel Assist (nearest location), this is MERMAID, MERMAID, MERMAID calling on channel 16
- The Vessel Assist dispatcher will answer and ask you if it is an emergency, ask you to identify yourself, then will most likely tell you to move to a working channel (probably 68, 69, 71, 72, or 78A)
- Go to the VHF channel as directed and again identify yourself
- Explain why you need assistance and answer any questions asked by the dispatcher
- Provide your Vessel Assist number

Distress Signals

- Shoot red shells into the air using the flare gun. Do not point the gun at anyone. Aim down wind and away from the boat when shooting.
- Fog horn (manual)
- Horn on the VHF
- Hoist the orange distress flag with black ball and square
- Wave your arms up and down
- Hail the other vessel on the VHF radio

- Light a hand held flare or orange smoke. Hold the flare over the water on the lee side of the boat.