



## **MARINE SAFETY ALERT**

### ***Inspections and Compliance Directorate***

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Washington, DC

Safety Alert 02-97

### **EARLY MODEL ACR/RLB-23, 406 Mhz EPIRB PROBLEMS**

THIS ALERT APPLIES ONLY TO EARLY MODEL ACR/RLB-23, 406 Mhz EPIRB'S THAT HAVE MAGNETICALLY ACTIVATED INTERNAL SWITCHES AND **NOT** THE NEWER MODEL ACR/RLB-23, 406 MHZ EPIRB'S THAT HAVE SALT WATER ACTIVATION SWITCHES. Information provided courtesy of [Marine Safety Office San Francisco](#).

During the investigations into the events surrounding the recent loss of a commercial fishing vessel, it was found that the vessel's [EPIRB](#) successfully deployed from its hydrostatic release mount. However, the EPIRB's signal was never received by the search and rescue coordinators. It is believed that the EPIRB failed to transmit a signal because the power switch on the EPIRB itself was not turned to the required "ON-TEST" position when it was mounted in its storage bracket.

The investigation found that the vessel's ACR/RLB-23 EPIRB had been serviced by the manufacturer and returned to the owner just two weeks prior to the casualty. These EPIRB units are serviced and tested by the manufacturer and then shipped from the servicing facility ready to be used. Typically, the manufacturer places a narrow yellow tape labeled "DO NOT REMOVE BEFORE USE" over the "ON-TEST/OFF" switch found on the top of the EPIRB. This tape **MUST** be removed before the EPIRB is placed in its mounting bracket.

**OWNERS AND USERS OF EARLY MODEL ACR/RLB-23, 406 Mhz EPIRBs THAT HAVE MAGNETICALLY ACTIVATED INTERNAL SWITCHES ARE CAUTIONED THAT FAILURE TO MOUNT THE EPIRB CORRECTLY CAN LEAD TO A FALSE SENSE OF PROTECTION. THE EPIRB WILL NOT TRANSMIT A DISTRESS SIGNAL IF IT IS AUTOMATICALLY RELEASED UNLESS IT IS MOUNTED IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:**

1. Remove the narrow yellow tape labeled "DO NOT REMOVE BEFORE USE" which is affixed by the manufacturer over the "ON-TEST/OFF" switch on top of the EPIRB.
2. Place the "ARM/ON" switch found on the bottom of the mounting bracket to the "ARM" position. Make sure that the slide switch actually snaps into its indent.
3. Place the EPIRB into the foam cradles on the bottom of the mounting bracket. This should be accomplished by aligning the strobe light and switch guard at the top of the unit with the proper cut-outs on the foam locator of the mount.
4. Place the "ON-TEST/OFF" switch, located on the top of the EPIRB, to the "ON-TEST" position. Although this will actually turn the EPIRB on, the unit will turn off once it is correctly mounted in the bracket. The EPIRB's switch must **always** be in the "ON-TEST" position while it is in the mounting bracket.
5. Move the "ARM/ON" switch on the mounting bracket to the "ON" position ensuring that it snaps into the indent. The EPIRB will now activate and the strobe light will begin flashing within 15 seconds.

6. Return the "ARM/ON" switch on the mounting bracket to the "ARM" position. This should be done within 45 seconds of placing the "ARM/ON" switch on the mounting bracket to the "ON" position in step #5.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FAILURE TO MOVE THE "ARM/ON" SWITCH ON THE MOUNTING BRACKET TO THE "ARM" POSITION WITHIN 45 SECONDS WILL CAUSE THE EPIRB TO TRANSMIT A DISTRESS SIGNAL.**

7. Secure mounting cover over EPIRB.
8. The strobe will now shut off but the EPIRB will be armed and ready for automatic release in the event of a casualty.

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