

## Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRB)



Owners, operators, and crew members all are well aware how important it is to have equipment in good working condition, especially equipment that may be needed in case of an emergency and particularly such as a sinking. An EPIRB is one of those items that must be ready to use. When it is deployed, it must also be used correctly.

**Requirement.** Commercial fishing industry vessels operating on the high seas (beyond the three mile territorial sea line) or beyond three miles from the coastline of the Great Lakes (unless exempted) must carry a 406 MHz EPIRB. A Category 1 EPIRB that will float-free and automatically activate is required on vessels 36 feet or more in length. A Category 2 EPIRB that must be manually activated is allowed on vessels less than 36 feet in length and on vessels which have a builder's certification that it is constructed with sufficient inherently buoyant material to keep the flooded vessel afloat. **Note:** A Personal Locator Beacon does not satisfy the requirement to carry an EPIRB.



**How it Works.** EPIRBs are designed to transmit a radio signal when activated. The signal is picked up by a SAR satellite and sent to a ground receiving station and on to a control center. The source is identified through registration. A Rescue Coordination Center will attempt to contact the owner for information and verification or dispatch rescue resources to the location of the signal.

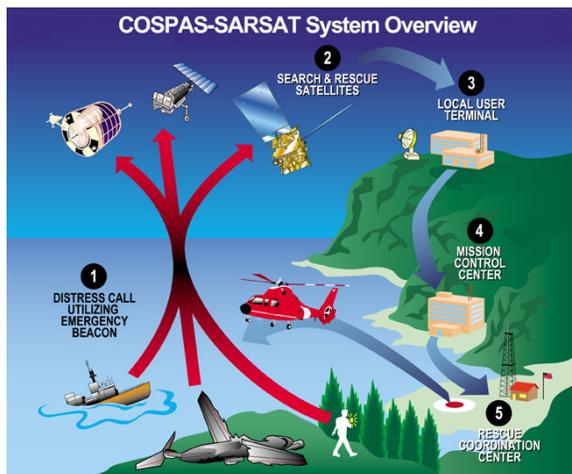
**Effective Use.** EPIRBs are designed to be used in the water, and actually use the water to maximize their signal strength. Also, they broadcast best when no metal objects are close by to interfere with their signal. So, to make the most of an EPIRB in case of an Emergency:

- Be sure the EPIRB is floating in the water.
- Secure the EPIRB to the vessel or survival craft with its lanyard or other line.
- Keep the activated EPIRB away from any metal structures that could block its signal.

**Registration.** All 406 MHz EPIRBs must be registered with NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). There is no cost for registering your EPIRB. Registration can be completed by calling NOAA's toll free number at (888) 212-7283, or on-line at [www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov](http://www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov). Be sure to update information on your registration when it changes, such as your phone number, address, or if you have a new vessel. If you sell your EPIRB, make sure that the purchaser re-registers it with his name and information, otherwise you may be contacted if it is activated.



**Testing and Servicing.** An EPIRB must be tested when it is installed and at least once each month thereafter. Your EPIRB should have a test position on the activation switch that allows the entire unit (electronics, battery, and antenna) to be tested without generating a false alarm. The battery on your EPIRB must be replaced before the expiration date marked on the battery, or immediately after the EPIRB is used for any purpose other than being tested. *Maintain a record of the EPIRB testing and battery replacement.* An EPIRB should be serviced only by the manufacturer or an approved facility. Ensure your EPIRB is installed in its approved bracket or holder and in a location so that it will float freely to the surface during an emergency.



Contact your local Coast Guard Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Examiner for a free no-fault dockside safety examination to ensure your vessel is in full compliance.

[www.FishSafe.info](http://www.FishSafe.info)