



Safety Equipment Flares and Distress Signals Marine Safety



Using flares

Flares are best used when you believe there is chance of it being seen.

The firing instructions are always printed on the flare, and you should be familiar with your flare's method. Hand-held red flares, especially, burn very hot and may spill glowing embers. Hold it downwind so that embers don't spill into the vessel and point it downwards while in your hand to avoid being burnt.

If you see a flare, contact the Water Police or phone 000 to report it.

Flares should always be readily accessible:

- stored in a waterproof container (marked with the registration number of your boat);
- in a place where they don't receive too much pounding in rough conditions;
- away from dampness; and
- away from heat sources above 60°C.



Safety equipment needs to be readily accessible.

Expiry dates

Flares must be within the expiry date and maintained in serviceable condition at all times. Check them regularly to ensure they have not been rendered unserviceable by exposure to moisture. Mildew or bubbling of paper coatings may indicate this.



Flares need to be in date.

Disposal

Do not discard unserviceable or out of date flares in general rubbish collections or land fill. Visit the DoT website www.transport.wa.gov.au/flares for disposal locations.

Unauthorised use of flares

There are severe penalties for the improper use of flares. Flares have a very serious purpose.

Falsely indicating distress rightly carries a severe penalty, but it also wastes a lot of time and resources – possibly weakening the ability to respond to a genuine emergency.

Do not leave flares in your vessel when it is not in use, and keep them away from children.

Contact details

Department of Transport

Email: Ed.Boat@transport.wa.gov.au
Website: www.transport.wa.gov.au/imagine
Marine Safety Hotline: 13 11 56

Police

Emergency: 000
Water Police: 9442 8600

Boating Weather Forecasts

Boating weather: 1300 815 916
Website: www.bom.gov.au



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or scan the QR Code

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All registrable and non-registrable vessels operating more than 400 metres from the shore in unprotected waters in WA must carry visual distress signals.

Visual distress signals

Types of visual distress signals

Orange smoke flares

These are designed for day use only and have no luminosity. They emit a cloud of orange smoke. Orange hand held flares burn for about 60 seconds. The potential sighting range by day is 4 kilometres, although this can drop to less than 1 kilometre in a fresh breeze. These flares are especially visible from search aircraft, even on windy days.

Red hand-held flares

These are designed for use both night and day and burn for about 45 seconds. Potential sighting range at night is 10–12 kilometres and about 4–6 kilometres during the day.

Electronic visual distress signal

These are water resistant light sources, which are able to be detected at night by rescuers responding to an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) or Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) activation. The role of an Electronic Visual Distress Signal (EVDS) is to assist a rescue once searchers are in the general vicinity of an EPIRB or PLB signal.

An EVDS may be carried in lieu of flares IF a GPS enabled EPIRB or PLB (must be worn) is also carried.

In choosing your EVDS ensure they meet the standards found on the DoT website.


Advantages over pyrotechnic flares include, no burning flame, easy to operate, buoyant and a one-time purchase. EVDS provide 360 degree visibility and can operate for up to 20 hours increasing your chance of survival and rescue.

Batteries need to be replaced annually.

Visual distress signal requirements


Registrable vessel:
Vessels including sailing vessels that are or can be propelled by mechanical power.

Non-Registrable vessel:
Tenders and sailing dinghies.



Red and Orange Flares (in-date)
At least two hand held red flares and two hand held orange flares must be carried.

OR



Electronic Visual Distress Signal
An electronic signalling device may be carried in lieu of flares **IF** a GPS enabled EPIRB or PLB (must be worn) is also carried.

PROTECTED WATERS Includes rivers, lakes, estuaries, harbours and waters within 400 metres from the shore in unprotected water but excludes the Cambridge Gulf and Lake Argyle.		UNPROTECTED WATERS Beyond 400 metres from the shore.	
Registrable Vessels	Non-registrable Vessels	Registrable Vessels	Non-registrable Vessels
RECOMMENDED	RECOMMENDED	✓	✓

Visual distress signal characteristics

Type	Suitable use	Burn time	Sighting range potential
Orange smoke flares	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Day use onlyNo luminosityOrange cloud of smokeEspecially visible from search aircraft	60 seconds	Day: 4 km Note: less that 1 km in a fresh breeze
Red hand-held flares	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Night and day	45 seconds	Day: 4-6 km Night: 10-12 km
EVDS white flashing light	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Night and dayAssists rescuers once they are in the general vicinity of an EPIRB or PLB signal.	20 hours	Day: up to 1 km Night: up to 10 km