

# SKIPPER'S MANUAL

A quick reference guide for recreational boaters



[TRANSPORTSAFETY.VIC.GOV.AU/MSV](https://TRANSPORTSAFETY.VIC.GOV.AU/MSV)



A branch  
of Transport  
Safety  
Victoria



# TRIP PREPARATION

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Properly maintain your vessel, engine and safety equipment



Fully charge your batteries



Check the marine weather report



Inform someone of your trip intentions



Ensure you have sufficient fuel and reserve fuel



You need a marine licence to be the master of a recreational power boat in Victoria

# SKIPPER CHECKLIST

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE

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- ☐ Plan your trip and let someone know where you are going and when you will return
- ☐ Have an emergency plan in case of bad weather or a marine incident
- ☐ Get the latest weather observations, predictions and bar crossing information
- ☐ Estimate your travel times and calculate how much fuel you will need plus reserves
- ☐ Check you have all the right safety equipment and that it is in good condition and in date
- ☐ Check your tool kit, repair/replacement spares and first aid supplies
- ☐ Carry food and water
- ☐ Check your trailer – ensure the boat is properly secured to the trailer
- ☐ Check and know the rules for the local waterway you are heading to:  
[transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/waterways](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/waterways)
- ☐ Make sure you have at least two methods of calling for help should something go wrong

# KEEP YOUR VESSEL IN GOOD CONDITION

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## PROPERLY MAINTAIN YOUR VESSEL

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- ☐ Inspect propeller nut and pin
- ☐ Check for water and fuel leaks
- ☐ Ensure bung/s are suitable and in good condition
- ☐ Ensure bilges are clean and dry
- ☐ Check reserve buoyancy for condition
- ☐ Test steering for stiffness
- ☐ Check wiring
- ☐ Check and clean fuel filter
- ☐ Clean cooling system passages
- ☐ Replace outboard pull cord if fraying

## ENSURE YOU HAVE SUFFICIENT FUEL

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- ☐ Allow 1/3 out, 1/3 return and 1/3 reserve
- ☐ Always replace old fuel after periods of inactivity
- ☐ Inspect fuel lines, manual priming bulb and connections for cracks, leaks, etc

- ☐ Inspect the fuel tank for cracks or corrosion
- ☐ Always check for fuel smells and ventilate your boat well before starting the engine.

## FULLY CHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

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- ☐ The battery should be charged but never overcharged
- ☐ The terminals, cables and casings should be kept clean
- ☐ Test all electrical equipment operating from the battery such as radios, gauges, power tilt, navigation lights.

**YOU CAN DOWNLOAD A HANDY  
PRE-TRIP CHECKLIST FROM  
[TRANSPORTSAFETY.VIC.GOV.AU/MSV/TRIP-PREP](https://TRANSPORTSAFETY.VIC.GOV.AU/MSV/TRIP-PREP)**

# LIFEJACKET TYPES



**TYPE 1  
LEVEL 100+**



**TYPE 1  
LEVEL 100+  
INHERENTLY BUOYANT**



**TYPE 2  
LEVEL 50**



**TYPE 3  
LEVEL 50 S**

VESSEL TYPE	COASTAL WATERS	ENCLOSED WATERS	INLAND WATERS
Powerboat up to and including 4.8 m in length	Type 1	Type 1	Type 1, 2 or 3
Powerboat more than 4.8 m but not more than 12 m in length	Type 1	Type 1	Type 1, 2 or 3
Personal watercraft	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3
Kayak/canoe	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3

*Lifejackets must be carried for each person on board or being towed.*

# LIFEJACKETS SAVE LIVES

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<b>POWER DRIVEN VESSELS AM I SUBJECT TO THE RULES ON WEARING PFDS?</b>	<b>Action If you answer yes:</b>
Is the vessel underway?	Yes – read on
Am I in an open area of the vessel?	Yes – read on
Is the vessel 12 metres or less in length?	Yes – read on
<b><i>IF YOU ANSWER 'YES' TO ANY OF THE STATEMENTS BELOW PUT ON YOUR LIFEJACKET</i></b>	
I have children under ten years of age in an open area of the vessel when underway	Yes – put on their lifejacket(s)
The vessel is 4.8 m or less in length	Yes – put on your lifejacket
I am operating alone or with someone who is unable to assist me*	Yes – put on your lifejacket
I am about to cross an ocean bar or enter a designated hazardous area*	Yes – put on your lifejacket
I am operating at night (between 1 hour after sunset and 1 hour before sunrise) or in restricted visibility*	Yes – put on your lifejacket








The vessel is disabled*	Yes – put on your lifejacket
I am operating in an area where the Bureau of Meteorology has issued a gale, storm or hurricane force wind warning, a severe thunderstorm warning or a severe weather warning*	Yes – put on your lifejacket
I am operating on a yacht that has no safety barriers, lifelines, rails, safety harness or jacklines*	Yes – put on your lifejacket

**\*Note:** These circumstances are considered **heightened risk**. Heightened risk is not only limited to when there is significant likelihood that the vessel may capsize or be swamped by waves or the occupants of the vessel may fall overboard or be forced to enter the water. It also occurs when there is a restriction on the ability to anticipate such an event, such as when a hazard cannot be seen.









**AS THE SKIPPER YOU MUST ENSURE THAT  
LIFEJACKETS ARE WORN BY ALL ON BOARD IF YOU  
ARE BOATING IN ANY OF THE ABOVE SITUATIONS**

# SAFETY EQUIPMENT

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SAFETY ITEMS YOU REQUIRE IF YOU ARE IN A POWERBOAT				
	on coastal waters more than two nautical miles from shore:	on coastal waters less than 2 nautical miles from shore:	on bays and estuaries:	on inland waters, including rivers, lakes and dams:
 lifejacket per person on board/towed	Type 1	Type 1	Type 1	Type 1, 2 or 3
 approved fire extinguisher	For vessels less than 8 m, one fire extinguisher of the minimum nominated capacity. For vessels 8 to 12 m, two fire extinguishers (one of the minimum nominated capacity). For vessels more than 12 m, three fire extinguishers (one of the minimum nominated capacity).			
 waterproof buoyant torch	1	1	1	1
 anchor and chain or line or both	1	1	1	
 bailer (if no electric or manual bilge pumping system)	1	1	1	1
 bucket with lanyard (can also double as a bailer)	1	1	1	1
 electric or manual bilge pumping system (if vessel has covered bilge or closed underfloor compartments other than airtight void spaces)	1	1	1	1



	pair of oars with rowlocks or pair of paddles (if vessel is up to and including 4.8 m)	1	1		1
	handheld orange smoke signals	2	2	2	
	handheld red distress flares	2	2	2	
	lifebuoy if vessel is more than 8 m but less than 12 m in length	1	1	1	1
	lifebuoys if vessel is more than 12 m in length	2	2	2	2
	dinghy or life raft if vessel is more than 12 m in length	1	1		
	compass	1			
	marine radio	1			
	red star parachute distress rocket	1			
	registered EPIRB	1			

**PWC RIDERS MUST WEAR TYPE 1, 2 OR 3 LIFEJACKET AND  
CARRY A WATERPROOF BUOYANT TORCH AT ALL TIMES.  
WHEN RIDING MORE THAN 2 NAUTICAL MILES OFFSHORE  
YOU MUST CARRY A REGISTERED EPIRB.**

# GET TO KNOW YOUR LIFEJACKET

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- Inflatable lifejackets need to be inspected and serviced periodically. Always refer to the manufacturer's instructions which may be found on their website.
- A self-inspection is a yearly activity carried out by the owner of the lifejacket.
- A service is carried out by a professional service agent approved by the lifejacket manufacturer.

## TIPS

- Look over the lifejacket for any signs of physical damage that has occurred during storage or use.
- Check the CO<sub>2</sub> cylinder is in good condition and screwed down tight on the 'o' ring.
- Make sure the inflation tube is intact and the valve is operational.



# MARINE WEATHER

## INTERNET

Visit [bom.gov.au/marine](http://bom.gov.au/marine) for:

- latest weather charts
- satellite and radar images
- warnings and forecasts for the next four days
- tidal information
- sunset and sunrise times
- full schedules for all radio and phone services.

## METEYE

MetEye shows the official forecasts produced by the Bureau of Meteorology in an interactive map of 6x6 km grids. Forecasts are available for wind, waves, weather and much more in three hourly increments for up to seven days ahead.



## TIPS

- Gusts are increases in wind speed lasting for just a few seconds. They typically range 30–40 per cent greater than the average wind speed.
- Maximum wave heights can be twice the average predicted height especially with wind against tide and current.
- Winds can be 40 per cent stronger than forecast.

# RADIO WEATHER SERVICES

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<b>27MHz</b>	Provides weather services from limited coast stations.
<b>VHF Marine Radio Victoria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Broadcasts Victorian coastal waters forecasts on VHF channel 67 at 06:48 and 18:48 Eastern Standard Time.</li><li>• Broadcasts an initial weather warning on VHF Channel 67 as soon as possible after receipt.</li><li>• Broadcasts current weather warnings at 00:48, 02:48, 04:48, 06:48, 08:48, 10:48, 12:48, 14:48, 16:48, 18:48, 20:48, 22:48 eastern standard time (EST) on VHF channel 67 following initial broadcast until notice of cancellation is received by facsimile from the Bureau of Meteorology.</li><li>• Broadcasts notices of cancellation of weather warning as soon as possible after its receipt and at the next scheduled Victorian coastal weather forecast broadcast.</li></ul> <p>NB: Broadcasts of, and cancellation broadcasts of, weather warnings will be preceded by a SECURITE announcement on VHF channel 16.</p>
<b>MF/HF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Bureau of Meteorology broadcasts weather forecasts to eastern Australia from Charleville on: 8176 and 12365kHz — all hours.</li><li>• 4426 and 16546kHz — all day (7am–6pm).</li><li>• 2201, HF 6507kHz — by night (6pm–7am).</li><li>• Scheduled broadcast times for Victorian coastal waters are: 0130, 0530, 0930, 1330, 1730 and 2130 EST (add one hour for EDST).</li><li>• Warnings are broadcast every hour starting 0000 EST.</li><li>• Some limited coast stations broadcast weather forecasts at various times.</li></ul>

# REFUELLING

- Do not refuel with persons onboard.
- Keep the fuel nozzle earthed and touching the filler neck.
- Know where the fire fighting equipment is at the marina or petrol station and how to use it.
- Clean up any splashes or spills immediately.
- Where possible, fill the fuel tanks away from the vessel in a well ventilated, no smoking area.
- After refuelling, ventilate bilges by operating a blower fan if fitted.
- Do not start the vessel engine if you can smell fuel. Fuel vapour is explosive!
- After refuelling, always start the vessel before boarding passengers.
- Secure spare fuel in a tightly capped, secured container.



# SAFE OPERATION

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## MAXIMUM SPEED



- 5 knots within 50 m of a person in the water, or a vessel on all state waters.
- 5 knots within 100 m of a vessel or buoy on which a dive flag is displayed on all state waters.
- 5 knots within 50 m of a fixed or floating structure (including a wharf, jetty, slipway, diving platform or boat ramp) and the water's edge on inland waters.
- 5 knots within 50 m of a wharf, jetty, slipway, diving platform or boat ramp except in an access lane on coastal and enclosed waters.
- 5 knots within 200 m of water's edge (except in an access lane) on coastal and enclosed waters.

***These limits may be varied by scheduled waterways rules.***

***For more information visit: [transportafety.vic.gov.au/msv/waterways](https://transportafety.vic.gov.au/msv/waterways)***

## DON'T DRINK AND BOAT



- .00 blood alcohol limit applies for operators and masters under 21 years of age.
- .05 blood alcohol limit applies for 21 years of age and over.









**MAINTAIN A PROPER LOOKOUT AT ALL TIMES  
AND OPERATE AT A SAFE SPEED.**

## SAFE LOADING

Overloading is dangerous and seriously reduces the stability and seaworthiness of your boat. It reduces freeboard and makes your boat less able to resist waves and more likely to be swamped.

Unless specified by the manufacturer, the maximum number of people who can be carried in a recreational boat is represented below:

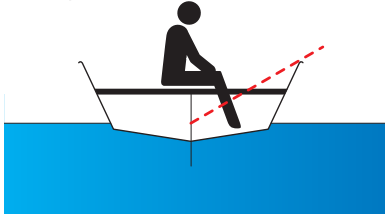
If the length of the vessel is less than 3 m, a maximum of 2 people	
If the length of the vessel is 3 m to less than 3.5 m, a maximum of 3 people	
If the length of the vessel is 3.5 m to less than 4.5 m, a maximum of 4 people	
If the length of the vessel is 4.5 m to less than 5 m, a maximum of 5 people	
If the length of the vessel is 5 m to less than 5.5 m, a maximum of 6 people	
If the length of the vessel is 5.5 m to less than 6 m, a maximum of 7 people	
A child up to and including one year of age is not counted.	
A child from one year of age up to and including 15 years of age is counted as 0.5 people	

## WARNING

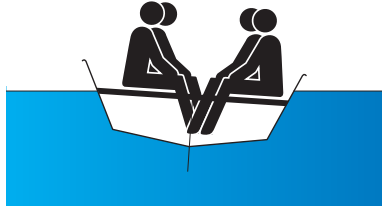
The maximum carrying capacity stated in the table is determined for vessels operating in good conditions. A reduction in the maximum number of people must be made if in adverse conditions or when on open sea. Carrying capacity is assessed as 75 kg per person, with an additional allowance of 15 kg per person for personal gear.

# VESSEL STABILITY

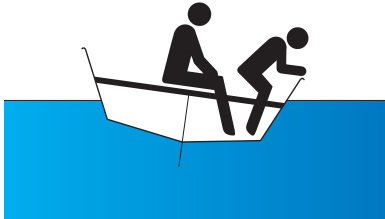
Overloading your boat seriously reduces stability, making your boat more likely to capsize.



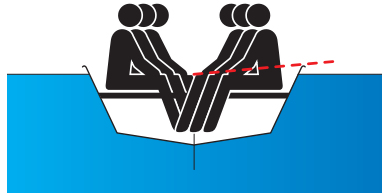
CAN RESIST WAVES 300 MM HIGH



BOAT LOADED TO MAXIMUM OF  
FOUR PEOPLE CAN HEEL LESS  
BEFORE SWAMPING



LIGHTLY LOADED WITH TWO PEOPLE



CAN TAKE NO HEEL BEFORE  
SWAMPING CANNOT RESIST ANY WAVE



# CROSSING BARS IS DANGEROUS

There are many bar crossings in Victoria, some of them include the entrances to:

- Andersons Inlet
- Barwon Heads
- Lakes Entrance
- Mallacoota
- Marlo
- McLoughlins Beach

## EXERCISE EXTREME CAUTION

- Conditions on a bar change quickly and without warning.
- No amount of experience or boat type makes crossing a bar safe.

## OBTAIN LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

**Assess weather conditions and obtain tide information.**

## BE AWARE:

- Night crossings are more hazardous.
- Vessels attempting to cross a bar at, or near, low tide are more likely to experience adverse conditions.
- It is preferable to cross on an incoming tide.

## PREPARING TO CROSS A BAR:

- Ensure deck openings, hatches and doors are securely battened down.
- Stow all loose gear and put on lifejackets.

## CROSSING A BAR:

- Check where other boats are crossing the bar – this is likely to be the best spot to cross.
- Monitor or look for the:
  - prevailing wind
  - wave pattern timing, i.e. look for sets
  - course to follow
  - bar traffic
  - alternative routes.







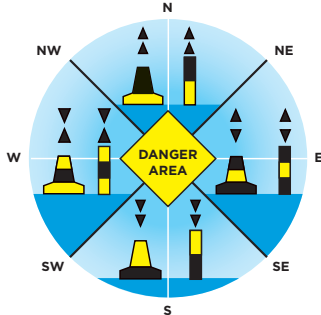
[transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/ocean-bars](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/ocean-bars)



**THIS IS HEIGHTENED  
RISK, YOU MUST WEAR  
A LIFEJACKET WHEN  
CROSSING A BAR**

# BUOYAGE SYSTEM

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SPECIAL	SAFE WATER	ISOLATED DANGER	NEW DANGERS	LATERAL	CARDINAL
 <p>Light: YELLOW any rhythm (refer to local chart)</p>	 <p>Light: WHITE occulting, isophase, 1 long flash every 10 seconds or morse code 'A'</p>	 <p>Light: WHITE group of 2 flashes</p>	 <p>Light: YELLOW/ BLUE ALT. One sec, blue, one sec, yellow with 0.5sec. of darkness between</p>	 <p><b>PORT</b> Light: RED any rhythm</p>  <p><b>STARBOARD</b> Light: GREEN any rhythm</p>	<div> <div> <p><b>NORTH</b> Light: WHITE continuous quick flashing PASS TO NORTH</p> </div> <div> <p><b>EAST</b> Light: WHITE 3 quick flashes PASS TO EAST</p> </div> </div>  <div> <div> <p><b>WEST</b> Light: WHITE 9 quick flashes PASS TO WEST</p> </div> <div> <p><b>SOUTH</b> Light: WHITE 6 quick flashes + 1 long flash PASS TO SOUTH</p> </div> </div>

- Marks may be buoys, piles or beacons.
- Marks may contain one or more of the identified characteristics.
- When numbered, odd number marks are starboard and even number marks are port in the direction of buoyage.
- Vessel operators should always refer to charts.
- Maintain a proper lookout at all times and operate at a safe speed.

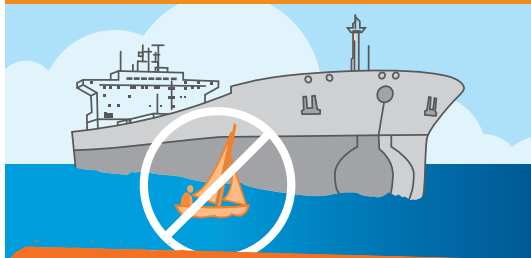


# STEER CLEAR OF LARGE SHIPS

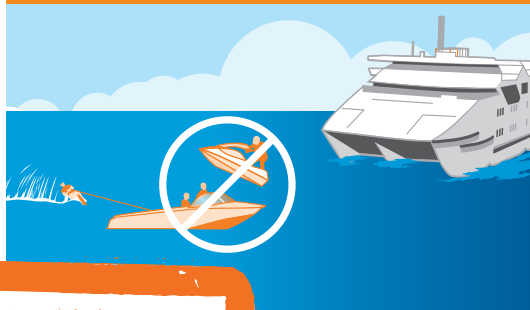
20

Recreational boats have a responsibility to steer well clear of large vessels. Small boats are prohibited from obstructing the passage of big ships. Don't anchor or drift in channels or transit only lanes.

**LARGE VESSELS CANNOT  
ALTER COURSE OR STOP**



**DON'T BOAT  
AROUND LARGE VESSELS**



**TIP**

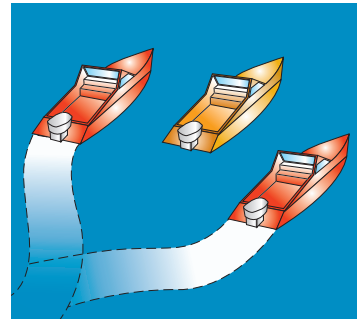
IF A LARGE SHIP SOUNDS FIVE SHORT BLASTS THE CREW BELIEVES YOU ARE AT RISK OF A COLLISION.

TAKE DECISIVE ACTION AND KEEP CLEAR  
OF THE OTHER VESSEL.

# SAFE NAVIGATION

These are some common rules from the Collision Regulations

- Rule 5 - Every vessel shall maintain a proper look out at all times. This includes when you are at anchor.
- Rule 6 - Every vessel shall proceed at a safe speed.
- Rule 7 - Every vessel shall use all available means to determine if the risk of collision exists. If there is any doubt such risk shall be deemed to exist.
- Rule 8 - Any action to avoid a collision shall be made in ample time so that it is readily apparent to another vessel. Any action to avoid a collision shall be such that vessels pass at a safe distance.
- Rule 9 - Vessels travelling in narrow channels must keep to starboard; avoid anchoring in a narrow channel.
- Rule 13 - Over taking vessels keep clear.



# DIVING OPERATIONS

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## BOATING AROUND DIVE AREAS

- When a divers flag (Code Flag A) is seen, a diver is in the water. Keep clear!
- Do not exceed 5 knots within 100 m of a vessel or buoy displaying this flag.
- If you are part of a dive activity carry a means of 'raising the alarm' should an emergency arise.
- Display lights for 'restricted manoeuvrability' if diving at night.
- Follow instructions in Harbour Masters' Directions if diving in shipping sensitive areas.
- Monitor VHF radio channels for shipping traffic or weather updates.
- Remember - keep a look out at all times, divers can surface anywhere. You're the skipper, you're responsible.



**YOU'RE THE SKIPPER,  
YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE**

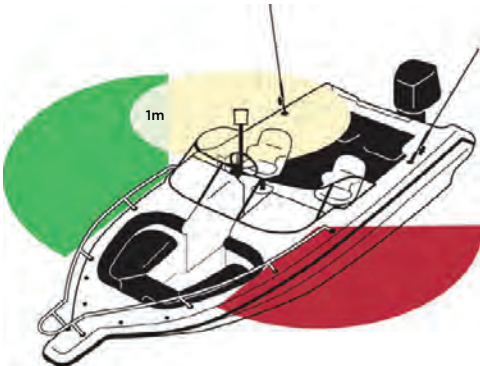
© RMS NSW

# NAVIGATION LIGHTS FOR POWERBOATS

Powerboats under 12 m in length while underway must show a masthead light, a sternlight and sidelights, or an all round white light and sidelights.

## RECREATIONAL VESSELS AT ANCHOR

All recreational vessels must show an all-round white light at anchor. If the vessel is drifting (underway but not making way) the vessel must display sidelights, masthead and sternlight.



# ANCHORING

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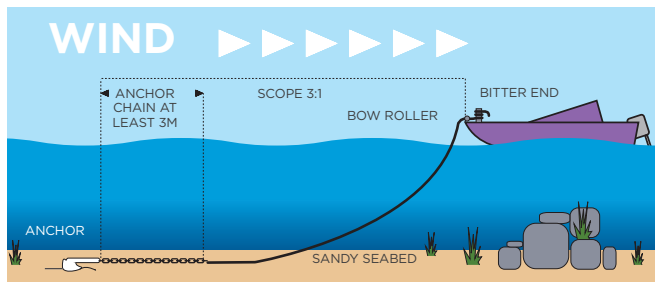
Anchoring is not only a normal part of boating, it is also an important safety measure in an emergency. Anchoring may keep the vessel safely positioned head on to heavy conditions and it can also allow you to retain your position.

## ANCHORING TIPS:

Choose your anchor type carefully to suit your vessel requirements, the depth of water and the bottom type you are likely to operate in.

Always lower the anchor rather than hurling the anchor and chain overboard which could lead to tangling.

The use of a sliding buoy system in anchor recovery is not recommended. If the anchor is to foul, large forces may be transferred to the vessel leading to capsize or damage to the vessel.





# EMERGENCY POSITION INDICATING RADIO BEACON (EPIRB) AND PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACON (PLB)

All boats venturing more than two nautical miles from the coast, excluding bays like Port Phillip and Western Port, are required to carry an approved and registered EPIRB.

However, it is recommended ALL vessels venturing on enclosed and coastal waters carry an EPIRB or a PLB.

Check the operation of your beacon once a month. Different beacons have different methods of testing, therefore strictly follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Make sure your beacon is located in an easily accessible position so that it can be immediately activated.

Ensure your beacon registration is renewed every two years and kept up to date to reflect any changes to your contact details. See [beacons.amsa.gov.au](http://beacons.amsa.gov.au)

## EPIRB

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Attach your EPIRB to a person, vessel or life raft (nothing that will sink). Ensure the aerial is always vertical for the best chance of detection. Ensure your body is not covering the beacon.

## PLB

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A PLB is not an EPIRB and does not meet the legislative requirements of the carriage of EPIRBs, however it is another form of raising the alarm.

Attach your PLB to the upper portion of your lifejacket, above water. Make sure the aerial is always vertical for the best chance of detection. Do not hold your PLB as you might inadvertently cover the GPS transmission and prevent detection.

# RADIOING FOR HELP

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VHF IS MONITORED 24 HOURS, 365 DAYS PER YEAR BY MARINE RADIO VICTORIA AND COVERS ENCLOSED WATERS AND COASTAL WATERS OUT TO 20 NAUTICAL MILES OFFSHORE.

## DISTRESS CALL FORMAT



A distress message has absolute priority over all other transmissions and may only be transmitted on the authority of the master or the person responsible for the safety of your vessel.

## DISTRESS MESSAGE

Distress signal	<i>MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY</i>
Name/call sign	<i>MAPLE MS742 MAPLE MS742 MAPLE MS742</i>
Position	<i>5 NAUTICAL MILES SOUTH OF FAWKNER BEACON</i>
Nature of distress	<i>SWAMPED AND SINKING. ESTIMATE FURTHER 10 MINUTES AFLOAT</i>
Other information	<i>SEVEN METRE HALF CAB WHITE HULL WITH BLUE AWNING</i>
(If time permits)	<i>THREE PERSONS ON BOARD EPIRB ACTIVATED OVER</i>

If no answer is received, repeat the distress call and message on the other distress frequencies or any other available frequency on which help might be obtained.

## URGENCY CALL

When a distress call is not fully justified, the urgency call Pan Pan (spoken three times) should be used to indicate that a very urgent message follows concerning the safety of vessel or person.

The call details should be the same format as a distress message except with the message beginning with PAN PAN, PAN PAN, PAN PAN.

## SAFETY SIGNAL

Safety signals are used when a station wants to pass important information concerning safety such as navigational warnings or weather warnings and are identified by the word: SECURITE (spoken three times as SAY-CURE-E-TAY).

[transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/emergency](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv/emergency)

It is highly recommended that you have a VHF radio with Digital Selective Calling (DSC) on your vessel.

VHF radios that are DSC enabled transmit a range of vessel identification information at the press of a button. This includes location information if connected to a GPS.

A DSC enabled radio must be linked to a Mobile Maritime Service Identity (MMSI) number. The MMSI number is issued by AMSA and applicants must hold a Marine Radio Operators Certificate of Proficiency or an Australian Waters Qualification.

**MSV DOES NOT RECOMMEND  
27MHz RADIOS**

## VHF MARINE RADIO CHANNELS



# EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

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## ALL OCCUPANTS TO PUT ON A LIFEJACKET



## RAISING THE ALARM - HOW TO GET HELP

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**By phone**  
call 000



**By flares**  
activate when you see  
a potential rescuer or  
when you believe they  
will be seen



**By marine radio**  
VHF - Ch 16  
VHF - Distress button  
on DSC equipped and  
registered radios



**By EPIRB**  
activate your  
registered emergency  
position indicating  
radio beacon



**By PLB**  
activate your  
registered personal  
locator beacon

## STAY WITH YOUR BOAT



A vessel is a lot easier to spot than a person

Anchor your vessel to maintain position if it is safe to do so.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US

**Transport Safety Victoria**

T 1800 223 022 | F +613 9655 6611 | E [info@transportsafety.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@transportsafety.vic.gov.au) | W [transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv](https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/msv)