

VHF Maritime Radio Use

Distress Calls

Radiotelephone distress call and message transmission procedure:

The distress call

- 1 The distress signal MAYDAY spoken three times.
- 2 The words THIS IS.
- 3 The call sign or other identification of the station in distress, spoken three times.

The distress message:

- 4 Particulars of its position.
- 5 The nature of the distress.
- 6 The kind of assistance desired.
- 7 Any other information which might facilitate rescue.
For example, the length, color, and type of vessel, and number of persons on board.

Operating Frequency Requirements

According to Federal Communications Commission Rule Part 80:

The radiotelephone stations on ships subject to Part II of Title III of the Communications Act must be capable of operating on the frequency 156.800 MHz and in other respects meet the requirements of §80.143. The radiotelephone stations on ships subject to the Safety Convention must be capable of operating in the simplex mode on the ship station transmitting frequencies specified in the frequency band 156.025 MHz to 157.425 MHz and in the semiduplex mode on the two frequency channels specified in the following table.

Additional information about operating requirements in the Maritime Services can be obtained from the full text of FCC Rule Part 80.

Channel Number	Frequency (MHz)	
	Transmit	Receive
01	156.050	160.650
02	156.100	160.700
03 ¹	156.150	160.750
04	156.200	160.800
05	156.250	160.850
06	156.300	156.300
07	156.350	160.950
08	156.400	156.400
09	156.450	156.450
10	156.500	156.500
11	156.550	156.550
12	156.600	156.600
13 ²	156.650	156.650
14	156.700	156.700
15 ²	156.750	156.750
16	156.800	156.800
17 ²	156.850	156.850
18	156.900	161.500
19	156.950	161.550
20	157.000	161.600
21 ¹	157.050	161.650
22	157.100	161.700
23 ¹	157.150	161.750

Channel Number	Frequency (MHz)	
	Transmit	Receive
24	157.200	161.800
25	157.250	161.850
26	157.300	161.900
27	157.350	161.950
28	157.400	162.000
60	156.025	160.625
61 ¹	156.075	160.675
62	156.125	160.725
63	156.175	160.775
64 ¹	156.225	160.825
65	156.275	160.875
66	156.325	160.925
67 ²	156.375	156.375
68	156.425	156.425
69	156.475	156.475
70	156.525	156.525
71	156.575	156.575
72	156.625	156.625
73	156.675	156.675
74	156.725	156.725
75	156.775	156.775
76	156.825	156.825
77 ²	156.875	156.875
78	156.925	161.525
79	156.975	161.575
80	157.025	161.625
81 ¹	157.075	161.675
82 ¹	157.125	161.725
83 ¹	157.175	161.775
84	157.225	161.825
85	157.275	161.875
86	157.325	161.925
87	157.375	161.975
88	157.425	162.025

Weather Channel		
01	Rx only	162.550
02	Rx only	162.400
03	Rx only	162.475
04	Rx only	162.425
05	Rx only	162.450
06	Rx only	162.500
07	Rx only	162.525
08	Rx only	161.650
09	Rx only	161.775
10	Rx only	161.275

¹ Simplex channels 3, 21, 23, 61, 64, 81, 82, and 83 cannot be lawfully used by the general public in USA waters.

² Channels 13, 15, 17, 67, and 77 must be used with a power output limit of 1 W.

Note: Detailed information about each operating frequency is beyond the scope of this document. Refer to the full text of FCC Rule Part 80 for detailed information about each operating frequency.