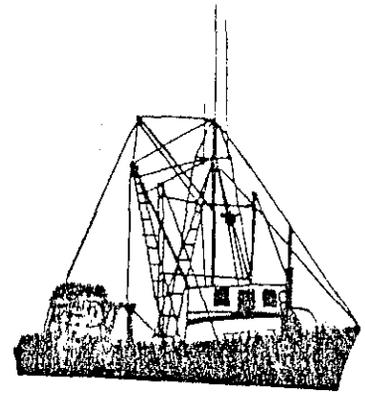


FISHING VESSEL SAFETY

FACT SHEET

#4 Visual Distress Signals



A visual distress signal is anything that makes you bigger, brighter or more noticeable to someone trying to find you. By yourself, you are a pretty small target in a very large ocean, even under ideal conditions.

Table 28.145 lists the distress signal requirements for fishing vessels. These are in addition to those required to be carried in the service pack (SOLAS A, B or Coastal Service Pack) found in your inflatable buoyant apparatus. The type of distress signal you are required to carry depends on how far offshore you operate.

The approval series number to meet fishing vessel safety requirements are very important. Check in Table 28.145 to see what applies to your vessel. The approval number series that begin with 160.0XX are not SOLAS approved. Only those approval numbers in which a "1" has replaced the "0" (ie. 160.1XX) meet the requirements of SOLAS. Note that vessels traveling more than 50 miles from the coastline are required to have SOLAS approved flares and smoke signals. Carefully check the numbers before you purchase them.

Vessels that operate in coastal waters must have night signaling devices and day signaling devices. If flares are carried, the same three flares may be counted toward meeting both the day and night requirement. Otherwise, you may choose an electric light (46CFR 161.013) for the night requirement. You can choose between a distress flag (46CFR 160.072) or any 3 USCG approved flares, or any 3 USCG approved smoke signals for the daytime requirement.

Vessels operating between 3 and 50 miles from shore and those greater than 50 miles from shore must carry the same number of distress signaling devices. The difference is that the vessels operating more than 50 miles offshore **MUST** have SOLAS approved distress signaling devices. The approval numbers must be 160.1XX.

Flares must be treated carefully. You should store them in a cool, dry place in a watertight container. They should be protected from banging into one another. Pyrotechnics have expiration dates, usually of three years. Expired signals do not count as part of the requirements. Dispose of any expired or bulging pyrotechnics immediately and properly. Contact your raft repacker for detailed instructions. Flares contain flammable metal powders which are classified as class D substances and if involved in a fire must be treated with a dry powder fire extinguisher. Never use water as some metals react violently when in contact with water.

Remember, only use flares when you know a rescuer is in the area, otherwise you have wasted it!

TABLE 28.145.—DISTRESS SIGNALS

Area	Devices required
Ocean, more than 50 miles from coastline.	3 parachute flares, approval series 46 CFR 160.136; plus 6 hand flares, approval series 46 CFR 160.121; plus 3 smoke signals, approval series 46 CFR 160.122.
Ocean, 3-50 miles from the coastline; or more than 3 miles from the coastline on the Great Lakes.	3 parachute flares, approval series 46 CFR 160.136, or 160.036; plus 6 hand flares, approval series 46 CFR 160.121 or 160.021; plus 3 smoke signals, approval series 46 CFR 160.122, 160.022, or 160.037.
Coastal waters, excluding the Great Lakes; or within 3 miles of the coastline on the Great Lakes.	Night visual distress signals consisting of one electric distress light, approval series 46 CFR 161.013 or 3 approved flares; plus: Day visual distress signals consisting of one distress flag, approval series 46 CFR 160.072, or 3 approved flares, or 3 approved smoke signals. ¹

¹ If flares are carried, the same 3 flares may be counted toward meeting both the day and night requirement.

