

## Unit 37

# COMMUNICATIONS

## ACTION BY A SHIP IN DISTRESS

### Transmission of the Distress Message

A ship in distress should transmit the appropriate alarm signal followed by the distress call and message on one or both of the international distress frequencies, i.e. 500 kHz (radiotelegraphy) and 2182 kHz (radiotelephony).

In certain cases, e.g. in pilotage waters, it may in addition be helpful to transmit the distress call and message on VHF Channel 16 (156.8 MHz).

It may also be desirable, in remote ocean areas, to transmit the distress call and message, in addition, on a ship-shore H/F circuit to an RCS. This should be done in all cases where distress calls on 500 kHz, 2182 kHz or Channel 16 are not replied to by other stations.

Should there be any doubt concerning the reception of the distress message, it should also be transmitted on any frequency available to which attention might be attracted such as an inter-ship frequency which may be in use in local areas. Before changing frequency, however, adequate time should be allowed for a reply.

In the event of failure of the ship's radio station, it may be possible to transmit a message using the portable equipment, provided for use in the survival craft, connected to the ship's main aerial system.

The use of an emergency position-indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) may be a further means for alerting ships in the vicinity.

Satellite communications (Satcom), such as INMARSAT, enable the users to reach a rescue coordination service (RCS), within seconds. The Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), established by IMO gives shore-based RCSs a major role in the coordination and use of rescue services in the event of a distress incident.

In radiotelephony distress messages are prefixed by the marker word MAYDAY /'mei'dei/, from French "m'aidez" (help me!).

### Components of the distress message

Important components of the distress message include

- a. Identification of the ship;
- b. Position;
- c. Nature of the distress and kind of assistance required;
- d. Any other information which might facilitate the rescue (e.g. the master's intention, including the number of persons, if any, leaving the ship).

It will also be important to furnish relevant information such as:

- a. Weather in the immediate vicinity, direction and force of wind, sea and swell, visibility, presence of navigation dangers (e.g. icebergs);
- b. Time of abandoning ship;
- c. Number of crew remaining on board;
- d. Number of seriously injured;
- e. Number and type of survival craft launched;
- f. Emergency location aids in survival craft or in sea.

*EXAMPLE 1. Initial Distress Message*

*Vessel «Seawolf» sending a distress message:*

MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY  
THIS IS  
SEAWOLF SEAWOLF SEAWOLF  
MAYDAY  
SEAWOLF, KILO NOVEMBER NOVEMBER TANGO  
POSITION: LATITUDE: TWO-FOUR DEGREES  
FIVE-TWO MINUTES NORTH LONGITUDE: ONE-THREE-NINE DEGREES  
ZERO-FIVE MINUTES EAST  
COLLISION IN FOG WITH MOTOR TANKER OTOK, SINKING  
CREW ABANDONED VESSEL  
REQUEST: IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE  
OVER

*EXAMPLE 2. Distress Acknowledgement Message*

*Vessel «Frog» acknowledges the receipt of distress message:*

MAYDAY  
SEAWOLF SEAWOLF  
KILO NOVEMBER NOVEMBER TANGO  
THIS IS  
FROG, JULIETT ALFA UNIFORM  
MAYDAY RECEIVED  
OVER

*EXAMPLE 3. Assistance Message*

*Vessel «Frog» is coming to the assistance of the distressed vessel «Seawolf»*

MAYDAY  
SEAWOLF  
THIS IS FROG  
POSITION: LATITUDE: FOUR-EIGHT DEGREES  
TWO-ZERO MINUTES NORTH  
LONGITUDE: ZERO-TWO-ONE DEGREES ONE-THREE MINUTES WEST  
SPEED: ONE-EIGHT KNOTS  
ETA POSITION OF DISTRESS: ONE-NINE-THREE-ZERO GMT  
OVER

*EXAMPLE 4.*

*Vessel «Seawolf» confirms the receipt of Assistance Message:*

MAYDAY  
FROG, THIS IS SEAWOLF  
UNDERSTOOD  
POSITION: TIME: ONE-NINE-THREE-ZERO UTC  
LATITUDE: FOUR-EIGHT DEGREES TWO-ZERO MINUTES NORTH  
LONGITUDE: ZERO-TWO-ONE DEGREES ONE-THREE MINUTES WEST  
SPEED: ONE-EIGHT KNOTS  
ETA (place of distress): ONE-NINE-THREE-ZERO GMT  
OVER

*EXAMPLE 5. Mayday Relay Message*

*Vessel «Shark» relaying distress message received from vessel «Seawolf»:*

MAYDAY RELAY MAYDAY RELAY MAYDAY RELAY  
THIS IS  
SHARK SHARK SHARK  
MAYDAY  
SEAWOLF, KILO NOVEMBER NOVEMBER TANGO  
FOLLOWING MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM SEAWOLF

TIME: ONE-TWO-THREE-ZERO GMT  
MAYDAY  
SEAWOLF KILO NOVEMBER NOVEMBER TANGO  
POSITION: LATITUDE: TWO-FOUR DEGREES FIVE-TWO MINUTES NORTH  
LONGITUDE: ONE-THREE-NINE DEGREES ZERO-FIVE MINUTES EAST  
COLLISION IN FOG WITH MOTOR TANKER OTOK, SINKING  
CREW ABANDONED VESSEL  
REQUEST: IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE  
THIS IS SHARK  
OVER

## IMO STANDARD MARINE COMMUNICATION PHRASES

### III/1 - DISTRESS COMMUNICATIONS

#### 1.1 - DISTRESS MESSAGES INVOLVING

##### 1.1.1 - Fire, explosion

*Vessel on fire (after explosion) in position ... .*

*I am on fire in position ... .*

*What is on fire?*

- Engine room / Hold(s) / (Deck) cargo / Superstructure /  
Accommodation on fire.

*Are dangerous goods on fire?*

- Yes, oil/... on fire.

*Is danger of explosion?*

- Yes, danger of explosion / No, no danger of explosion.

*What is damage?*

- No damage.  
- I am not under command.  
- I am making water.  
- I am sinking.

*Is fire under control?*

- Yes, fire under control / No, fire not under control (fire spreading).

*Can you get fire under control?*

*Is smoke toxic?*

*What kind of assistance do you require?*

- I require foam / CO2 extinguishers.  
- I require fire pumps.  
- I require fire fighting assistance.

*Report injured persons,*

- No person injured.  
- Number of injured persons/casualties:... .  
- I require medical assistance.

##### 1.1.2 - Flooding

*I have leak below water line.*

*I am making water.*

*Can you stop leak?*

- I will send pumps / divers  
- I have dangerous list.  
- I am in critical condition.

***How many compartments flooded?***

- ... compartments flooded.

***Can you proceed without assistance?***

- Yes, I can proceed without assistance / No, I cannot proceed without assistance.
- I require escort.

#### 1.1.3 - Collision

***I have collided with MV ... .***

***I have collided with unknown vessel/object.***

***I have collided with... .***

***I am not under command.***

#### 1.1.4 - Grounding

***I am / went aground in position... require assistance.***

***What part is aground?***

- Aground forward / amidships / aft / lull length.

***What kind of assistance do you require?***

- I require pumps / escort / tugs.
- I do not require assistance.

***Can you jettison cargo forward/aft to refloat?***

***Attention! Do not jettison IMO-class cargo.***

***When do you expect to refloat?***

- I expect to refloat at... .
- I expect to refloat when tide rises.
- I expect to refloat with tug assistance.

***Can you beach?***

#### 1.1.5 - List, danger of capsizing

***I have heavy list to port side/starboard side.***

***I have heavy list due to flooding.***

***I have heavy list due to shifting cargo.***

***List increasing / decreasing.***

***I am in danger of capsizing.***

***Listing stopped after transferring /jettisonning.***

#### 1.1.6 - Sinking

***I am sinking in position ... after collision / grounding / flooding / explosion ... .***

***I require assistance.***

***I proceed to your assistance.***

***I expect to reach you within ... hours/at... UTC.***

#### 1.1.7- Disabled and adrift

***I am not under command in position ... .***

***I am adrift near position ... .***

***I am drifting at... knots to ... degrees.***

#### 1.1.9 - Armed attack/piracy

***I am under attack of pirates.***

*MV ... under attack of pirates.*

*I require assistance.*

*MV... requires assistance.*

*Can you proceed?*

- **Yes, I can/ will proceed.**

- **No, I cannot/ will not proceed.**

1.1.10- Abandoning vessel

*I must abandon vessel after collision / grounding / explosion in position ... .*

## **A. Comprehension & vocabulary**

*A.1 Complete the following sentences referring to the reading text:*

1. A ship in distress can use the following to ask for assistance:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Satcoms are preferred today in distress communications because \_\_\_\_\_.

3. The distress marker word in radiotelephony is \_\_\_\_\_.

3. The components of a distress message are: \_\_\_\_\_.

*A.2 Say which marker words are used:*

- 1. When the distress message is acknowledged: \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2. When relaying the distress message: \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3. When confirming the receipt of the Assistance Message: \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4. In case of an Initial Distress Message: \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5. By a vessel coming to the assistance of the distressed vessel: \_\_\_\_\_.

*A.3 Make up a distress message on the basis of the following data:*

- 1. Your vessel SEACAT, DGAN, position 120° off point Black, two miles, developed a dangerous list, 16 degrees.
- 2. Your vessel BLUE BIRD, 13FCG, has received the distress message from M/ S SEACAT, but is unable to render assistance. Send an appropriate message to other vessels in the vicinity.
- 3. Vessel HAPPY ISLAND has received the distress message from vessel SEACAT, and is going to help the distressed vessel.
- 4. Your vessel SALMON, CDEF, struck an unidentified underwater object in position 16°15' N, 20°10' W, sinking. Send an appropriate distress message.
- 5. Vessel CODFISH, DGYG, pos. 51°20' N, 031°14' W, informs vessel MACKEREL that she is arriving at the place of distress at 16.30 hours, speed 19 knots.
- 6. Vessel SWORDEISH, YCAK, struck a mine, has a dangerous list. Relay this message to other ships and coastal stations. Your vessel's name: SHRIMP.
- 7. Ship station LOBSTER, CDEF, informs all ships that obligatory radio silence is finished. UTC 16.20.
- 8. Vessel CRAB, CGTD, confirms the receipt of the assistance message from vessel SQUID. Give position, speed, and ETA of the SQUID.

9. Vessel CUTTLEFISH, GDGC, informs vessel OCTOPUS that she has received her distress message. Supply other information as required (call signs, position, kind of distress).
10. Vessel EEL, GEKA, suffered heavy engine fire, sinking. Send an appropriate message as master of this vessel. Supply other necessary information.

**A.4** Supply the missing terms referring to the words in brackets:

• radiotelegraphy • alarm • call • distress • apparatus • distress  
• blast • ships • intervals • rockets • call sign • calls

- I. A vessel in 1. \_\_\_\_\_ has a number of signals to choose in order to attract attention from shore or other 2. \_\_\_\_\_ :
  - a 3. \_\_\_\_\_ or other explosive signal fired at 4. \_\_\_\_\_ of about one minute,
  - a continuous sounding with any fog signalling 5. \_\_\_\_\_ (a series of 6. \_\_\_\_\_ may be made by sounding S.O.S. in the Morse code),
  - 7. \_\_\_\_\_ or shells, throwing red stars, fired one at a time at short intervals,
  - a signal sent by 8. \_\_\_\_\_ or by any other radio-signalling method.
- II. In using radio telegraphy the following sequence is recommended:
  - the radiotelegraph 1. \_\_\_\_\_ signal (four second dashes)
  - the radiotelegraph 2. \_\_\_\_\_ signal (group S.O.S sent three times)
  - the radiotelegraph distress 3. \_\_\_\_\_ (group S.O.S sent three times, followed by the word "DE" and the ship's 4. \_\_\_\_\_ three times).

## **B. Grammar**

**B.1** Supply the appropriate form of the verb in brackets and write it into the right place in the sentence:

### **Satellite communications**

Conventional radio to be an important element in maritime safety (*continue*). In conventional radio the maritime distress channel of only R/T frequency (*consist*). In satellite communications there at least 300 channels (*be*).

Two special frequencies for ship-to-shore request messages (*use*), and these continuously by all coast earth stations for a Priority 3 requests (*monitor*).

In conventional radio, alarm and distress signals manually (*set up*) and channels not against harmful interference (*protect*).

In satellite communications the Priority 3 code of the request message the system mechanism to assign a free channel (*trigger*).

The maximum range for a Maritime Distress Channel in conventional radio an 800 km zone around the ship (*be*), whereas in satellite communications the same channel only beyond coverage of satellites (*be usable*), which in high polar regions (*be*).

**B.2** Complete the text below with the appropriate conjunctions:

• which • because • that • so that • when

### **Distress signals**

Distress signals are transmitted by any immediate means, sent out from a ship in distress 1. \_\_\_\_\_ of a fire on board, a collision with other ships, or wrecks, or rocks which has caused serious damage to the hull 2. \_\_\_\_\_ a large amount of water is flooding the holds, and any other urgent necessity by which the transmitting ship is threatened.

In radiotelephonic communication between ships and shore stations, particular attention should be given to any message 3. \_\_\_\_\_ is prefixed by one of the following words: Mayday, Pan, Securite.

Mayday, used in case of distress, indicates 4. \_\_\_\_\_ a ship, aircraft, or other vehicle is threatened by grave and imminent danger and requests immediate assistance. Pan Pan, 5. \_\_\_\_\_ is used in case of urgency, indicates that the calling station has a very urgent message to transmit, concerning the safety of a ship, aircraft or other vehicle, or the safety of a person. Securite, 6. \_\_\_\_\_ is used in case of safety, is meant to indicate that the station is going to transmit a message regarding the safety of navigation or important weather forecasts in the area or simply warnings. 7. \_\_\_\_\_ a radio operator on a ship receives messages prefixed by these words, he must immediately call the master or the officer on watch and pay particular attention to any other following transmissions.

## ***C. Translation***

*C.1 Translate the following sentences into English:*

1. Sono in pericolo e richiedo assistenza immediata.
2. Richiedo assistenza immediata: ho uno sbandamento pericoloso.
3. Richiedo assistenza immediata: la mia apparecchiatura di governo è danneggiata/sono in avaria.
4. Richiedo assistenza immediata: sono in secca/vado alia deriva/il mio albero porta elica si è rotto.
- 5 Che tipo di assistenza richiedete? Richiedo assistenza medica.
6. Sto dirigendomi in vostro soccorso.
7. Sto affondando.
8. La nave «Malibu» è affondata in Latitudine ... Longitudine... .
9. Avete visto affondare la nave?
10. Qual'è la profondità del mare nel punto in cui la nave è affondata.