



## U.S. Coast Guard Sector Baltimore

2401 HAWKINS POINT ROAD, BLDG 70

BALTIMORE, MD 21226-1791

Phone: (410) 576-2693

Fax: (410) 576-2536

### MARITIME SAFETY & SECURITY BULLETIN 09-08

April 22, 2008

#### REMINDER TO CHECK EPIRBs AND REPLACE 406 MHz BEACONS

The Coast Guard is reminding boaters to check their boating equipment, because after Feb. 1, 2009, only distress alerts from 406 MHz beacons will continue to be detected and processed by search and rescue satellites worldwide. Older model EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons) that transmit a distress alert on 121.5 MHz or 243 MHz will no longer be monitored by satellite, and is likely to go completely undetected in an emergency. Mariners disposing of their old EPIRB before Feb. 1, 2009 are urged to first remove the battery.

Although recreational boaters are not required to carry an EPIRB, they are strongly recommended for ALL boaters venturing outside the harbor, along with a VHF-FM marine band radio. The 406 MHz signal sent by the newer EPIRBs when a mariner encounters distress are picked up by the COSPAS/SARSAT satellite constellation, which determines the EPIRBs position through triangulation. EPIRBs with embedded GPS are even more helpful in quickly finding a distressed boater. With GPS coordinates, the position of distress is pinpointed almost immediately. Without GPS, it may take two or three satellite passes to come up with a good, triangulated position.

As long as the new 406 MHz beacon has been registered (which is required by law), search and rescue authorities can quickly confirm that the distress is real, who they are looking for, and a description of the vessel or aircraft. This means an effective search can be initiated even before a final distress location has been determined for non-GPS EPIRBs. It also means that a false activation may be resolved with a phone call to the beacon owner, saving resources for actual distresses.

This registration is free and can be done on the internet at: [www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov](http://www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov) or it can be mailed/faxed to NOAA by calling 1-888-212-SAVE. Beacon registrations must be updated at least every two years or when information such as emergency contact phone numbers and other vital information changes. This registration information is only available to authorized search and rescue personnel. It saves lives.

More potentially life-saving information along with how to take a boating safety course or get a free vessel safety check from the Coast Guard Auxiliary can be found on the internet at: [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian K. Penoyer".

**BRIAN K. PENOYER**  
COMMANDER, U.S. COAST GUARD  
USCG SECTOR BALTIMORE