



# MEDIA RELEASE

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Immediate Use

## **DISTRESS BEACON HOAXES: MORE VIGILANCE NEEDED**

West Australian boat owners are being urged to be more vigilant with their distress beacons (EPIRBs\*) following a string of hoax activations in the past six months.

The Western Australia Police Service and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority are urging distress beacon owners to take all necessary steps to prevent their theft while boats are in areas accessible to the public.

"In the past six months, there have been 15 malicious beacon activations mainly in and around Perth," an AMSA spokesman said.

"As every beacon is treated as a genuine alarm, this has required a significant search and rescue response often involving a helicopter homing in on the distress beacon signal."

"These hoaxes have the potential to divert search and rescue and police assets away from a genuine emergency."

Water Police Officer in Charge, Gary Tattersall said there were heavy fines and penalties for people found to be maliciously activating distress beacons and the police are willing to prosecute in these instances.

"There appears to be an orchestrated campaign underway and the concern is that while we are chasing these false alarms someone in genuine trouble will not get the response they need or deserve."

"As such, these malicious beacon activations have the potential to place the lives of those in genuine trouble at much greater risk."

AMSA and the Police recommend that EPIRBs should be removed when boats are left in places accessible to the public. It is vital, however, that beacons are replaced and readily accessible while the boat is at sea.

Further information: A/Senior Sergeant Gary Tattersall, Western Australia Police service, 08 9442 8600, Ben Mitchell, AMSA, 0418 164 901

\*Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon

Further information:

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