



Australian Government

Australian Maritime Safety Authority



# AVIATION SEARCH AND RESCUE

# RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE – AUSTRALIA



Rescue Coordination Centre – Australia (RCC Australia) is the national aviation and maritime search and rescue coordination agency operating 24 hours a day.

RCC Australia, which is part of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), operates from AMSA's Head Office in Canberra and coordinates search and rescue (SAR) for all missing aircraft, forced landings, or ditchings. RCC Australia will act immediately on missed reports, MAYDAY calls, expressions of concern from family, friends and the community, and Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) signals.

While no one ever plans to get into trouble, the possibility of an emergency situation should be considered by all pilots before take off.

# SAFETY PREPARATION

Basic safety preparation before each flight could end up saving your life and, at the very least, will speed up your rescue. Following is a list of actions that will prepare you should you find yourself in an emergency situation:

- ▶ Give careful consideration to route selection avoiding dangerous regions if possible, particularly if you are in a single engine aircraft.
- ▶ Submit a Flight Plan or a SARTIME to AirServices Australia or leave a Flight Note with someone responsible. RCC Australia will be notified if you go missing and know where to start searching.
- ▶ Always have the area or overlying air traffic frequency on your radio to immediately contact Air Traffic Control or another aircraft in an emergency.
- ▶ Consider every flight a potential survival situation and carry survival and first aid equipment. Water, warm clothing, critical medications, and a life jacket with light are vital.
- ▶ Review the emergency section of the ERSA, the VFG, AIP or Jeppesen document. These provide instructions and survival advice for emergency situations.
- ▶ Make a MAYDAY call if you have grave concerns for your safety and squawk code 7700 on your transponder. Cancel the call later if the situation changes. A MAYDAY should include your call sign, nature of distress, intentions, present position, level and heading, and any other useful information such as the number of people onboard.
- ▶ Carry a portable distress beacon on your person.

## WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY



Given the remote locations that are traversed by aircraft, the chances of surviving the initial crash decreases rapidly with time. A major morale boost is knowing that authorities are aware of your situation and a search is being readied.

Carrying appropriate survival equipment, and knowing how to use it will vastly improve your chances of surviving an accident while waiting for help to arrive.

After a crash, ensure all passengers are clear of the aircraft. Try to make the crash scene more visible from the air and make sure your ELT is on. Do not leave the vicinity of your aircraft unless it is absolutely necessary. If you move away from your aircraft, leave signs to direct the search effort in the right direction.

Even with your ELT transmitting, it may take some time to locate you, particularly in remote areas and at night. You may need to improvise shelter and light a fire. If possible, get your shelter arranged and a fire lit before sunset.

If you have access to a VHF radio, make contact with other aircraft in the area on all appropriate frequencies, including the distress frequency: 121.5 MHz. Search aircraft and some high-flying jets monitor this frequency.

# FLIGHT NOTES AND SARTIMES

**FLIGHT NOTE**

Australian Commissioner  
Australian Maritime Safety Authority

NOTE: All times are local at that location  
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY - USE BLACK INK IF POSSIBLE

Leave cancellation time at final destination (if any)		Date
Call sign	Type	Radio call and land (include GPO)
Pilot's name	Mobile phone No.	Home contact (name & phone)
		TAD
KT		

Complete a separate line for each flight sector

DEP AD (Port & phone No.)	ETD (Local time)	Route (Starting point)	DEST & phone No.	PCN	Endurance (H   M   S)

**Remarks**  
(If mobile phone numbers of passengers / separation if different from call sign / any other useful information to aid search and tracking)

Note: Remember to turn on mobile phone after landing

**Emergency equipment**  
(tick boxes as appropriate)

ELF  Fuel  Purifier Frequency (if used)  AIS/BIS  GPS/SAR

First aid  Emergency Release  Water  Lifejackets  Liferaft  Priority Tracker

Other equipment / life-saving devices

Recall colour markings  Operating company name & contact No.

The holder of this flight note should contact AusSAR if the pilot has not arrived at the destination by the cancellation time shown above.  
Any delay could be crucial to the safety of the occupants of the aircraft.

**AusSAR: 1800 815 257 (freecall)**

Copies of this form can be obtained from AMSA's web site: [www.amsa.gov.au/forms/index.asp](http://www.amsa.gov.au/forms/index.asp)

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If you are planning to use a Flight Note, ensure that you leave it with someone who is aware of their responsibilities and is aware of the need to contact RCC Australia immediately if there are any safety concerns.

Flight Notes are available for download at [www.amsa.gov.au/Forms/amsa104.pdf](http://www.amsa.gov.au/Forms/amsa104.pdf).

If you conduct a flight with no SARTIME, Flight Plan, or Flight Note, there may be major delays in commencing the search. This means that you are relying on being able to get an emergency call out, using your ELT to alert RCC Australia or relying on someone noticing that you have gone missing.

**Remember to cancel your SARTIME with CENSAR (AirServices Australia) – 1800 814 931.**

# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN AIRCRAFT GOES MISSING?



RCC Australia will take immediate action to locate the aircraft by contacting the operator and registered owner, airfields, air traffic services and other people associated with the missing or overdue aircraft. The more information you provide the better placed the RCC will be to locate you.

If the aircraft is not found during the initial phase, a full search and rescue operation will be mounted. The timing and scale of the response will depend on the availability of search assets, the location and topography of the search area, weather conditions, and the time of day or night. Detailed flight information available via a Flight Note or Flight Plan greatly assists RCC Australia in search planning.

RCC Australia maintains a database of aircraft available for search and rescue and can call on a host of specialist SAR agencies and government organisations to carry out operations.

## **In-flight emergencies**

RCC Australia also assists AirServices Australia when dealing with in-flight emergencies, including identifying appropriate emergency response services that could be used in the event of a forced landing.



# DISTRESS BEACONS



Distress beacons, commonly referred to as ELTs by the aviation community, are vital search and rescue tools as they allow search aircraft to home on your position.

RCC Australia highly recommends that you carry a Portable Locator Beacon (PLB) on your person, even if the aircraft is fitted with a fixed ELT.

*Only 406 MHz beacons will be detected by satellite from 1 February 2009. 121.5 MHz beacons may only be detected by overflying aircraft.*

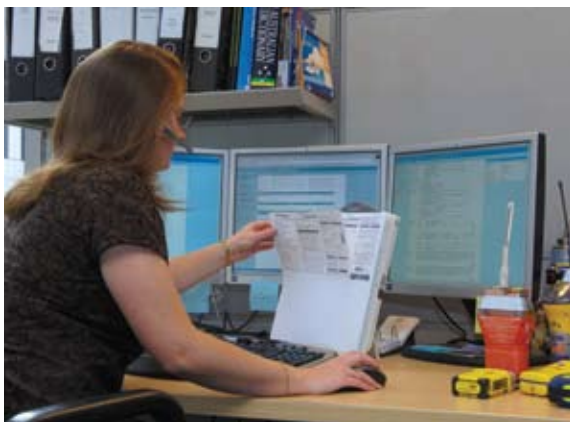
## Registration

Digital 406 MHz distress beacons can be registered online. Beacon owners will have protected access to their accounts and will be able to update details including changes to:

- ▶ ownership and emergency contact details;
- ▶ boat, aircraft or vehicle details;
- ▶ registered address details; or
- ▶ indicate the disposal of a beacon.

There is also a facility for owners to note trip itineraries so when a beacon is activated, RCC Australia will have access to current movements and be better placed to organise a suitable response. This does not replace advising a responsible person of your trip details.

To register your 406 MHz distress beacon online, or for more information visit [www.amsa.gov.au/beacons](http://www.amsa.gov.au/beacons).



## False alarms

Every distress beacon activation is treated as a real emergency until investigation proves otherwise. Inadvertent activations should be reported to RCC Australia on 1800 815 257 as soon as possible. There are no penalties for false alarms and by advising RCC Australia quickly, an unnecessary search could be avoided.

*Pilots should monitor VHF 121.5 MHz on start-up and shut down to ensure their ELT is not active.*



# IMPORTANT CONTACTS

## **Rescue Coordination Centre – Australia:**

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

GPO Box 2181

Canberra ACT 2601

P: 1800 815 257

## **406 MHz distress beacon information:**

P: 1800 406 406

F: 1800 406 329

## **General Inquiries:**

P: 02 6279 5000

F: 02 6279 5858

**[www.amsa.gov.au](http://www.amsa.gov.au)**

