



Marine Notice 2/2018

Electronic Visual Distress Signals

Purpose

This marine notice advises vessel owners, vessel operators, masters, officers, seafarer training organisations and industry organisations that AMSA does not consider Electronic Visual Distress Signals (EVDS) to be a suitable replacement for pyrotechnic distress signals.

Known Issues

Marine Order 30 (Prevention of collisions) gives effect to the *International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972* (COLREGS) and applies to all commercial and recreational vessels. Annex IV of the COLREGS lists the distress signals which are to be used to indicate if a vessel is in distress and requires assistance. This list does not include EVDS.

The National Standard for Commercial Vessels (NSCV) details the requirements for the construction, production and performance requirements for safety equipment. Under the NSCV, EVDS are not an approved means of distress signal.

The *International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974* (SOLAS) describes the standards that distress alerting equipment should meet and in Australia, AS 2092-2004 (Australian Standard for Pyrotechnic marine distress flares and signals for pleasure craft) sets the requirements for these devices.

EVDS are not an internationally or domestically approved distress signal and it is likely that, if seen, they may not be recognised as a distress signal in the event of a distress situation.

Considerations

To be effective, distress signals need to be recognised. EVDS devices are not compliant with the SOLAS Convention or Australia's technical performance standards for distress flares. The international carriage requirements do not recognise EVDS and Australia's national carriage requirements have not been amended to recognise them.

Tests conducted in Australia in 2017 indicate that the EVDS was not recognisable as a distress alert when seen. This reinforces that EVDS devices should not be used in place of a pyrotechnic flare.

As all vessels are required to comply with the COLREGS, distress signals carried should comply with either the SOLAS or the Australian standard.

AMSA will continue to monitor the development of EVDS and will consider changes to this Marine Notice when the standards and benefits are consistent with pyrotechnic flares.

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