

By Wilbur B. Scott

MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY!

Those are the words that grab everyone's attention, especially The United States Coast Guard! Every vessel Captain or operator knows, (or should know) those are the words that get you the assistance that you need during a medical or other life threatening emergency at sea. Without a doubt the marine radio is one of the most important items of safety equipment available to recreational boaters operating on our area's waterways!

For those of you who have a marine radio on board your vessel, Homosassa Flotilla 15-04 of your U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary has a **free** gift for your boat. However for now let's assume that you, your family and friends are out for a nice pleasure cruise or fishing trip on the gulf and one of your passengers experience a life threatening emergency. As a knowledgeable skipper you know how to immediately contact the U.S. Coast Guard for assistance via your marine radio on Channel 16. Ah, but wait a minute, let's suppose that it is **you** (the skipper) who is the victim of the emergency and are now unconscious or may have even fallen overboard. Do your passengers know what to do? Do they know how to operate your marine radio? Who to call? What to say? Let's hope that you are one of those Captains who have briefed your passengers on what to do in the event of such an emergency. Unfortunately, even if you have done so, in times of an actual emergency, people naturally become very excited and sometimes confused regarding what they should and should not be doing. Homosassa Flotilla 15-4 will send you a free gift that can help you and your passengers avoid that situation. It is an attractive red, white and blue placard for your boat that has easy to read and understand instructions for operating a marine radio during times of an emergency. The placard is weather resistant with an adhesive backing. Measuring 5" x 3 ½" the placard will take up very little space near your radio.

Now I would like to ask a question of those boaters who do not have a marine radio, (installed or portable) on board your vessel. Why do you not have one? They are not very expensive; they take up little space and will provide you with instant access to the USCG in times of an emergency. We all know how important time can be, especially when your boat is taking on water or you have a medical emergency on board! Emergencies can occur on the river and on the flats as well as far off shore! The marine radio is much more reliable and faster in an emergency situation on the water than are the cell phone or CB radio. CB radios are not suitable for marine operations and thus are not monitored by the United States Coast Guard!

There are three different types of marine radios in use today, namely, Very High Frequency FM (VHF-FM); Double Sideband AM (DSB-AM), and Single Sideband AM (SSB). Most popular among pleasure boaters are the VHF-FM sets which are designed for short range communications of less than 40 miles. They are well adapted to fisherman and pleasure boaters, and come in a wide variety of models at relatively modest prices. You are not required to have a Federal Communications License (FCC) to own or operate a marine radio. Some boaters feel that marine radios are something of a mystery. Some feel these instruments are too complicated, too

sophisticated for the smaller boats. Actually, marine radios manufactured today are nearly as simple to operate as your telephone.

Channel 16 on the marine radio is designated as a hailing and distress channel and as such is monitored 24 hours per day, seven days per week by not only the U.S. Coast Guard but by other vessels, merchant ships, coastal commercial stations and other stations both on shore and afloat. You may conduct non-emergency type of conversations on designated channels other than channel 16.

NOTE: Intentionally broadcasting a false "MAYDAY" call on your marine radio is a federal offense subject to prosecution which may result in a fine or imprisonment as well as for all costs incurred by the U.S. Coast Guard for any searches that may have been initiated as a result of such a call.

To receive your free placard just mail your request (**along with a self addressed stamped business size envelope**) to me at the address below and I will personally see that one mailed to you within 48 hours.

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