

EPIRB Registration

John Collins USCGAux SBOS ADSO-PE

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) are designed to save your life if you get into trouble by alerting rescue authorities and indicating your location. EPIRBs transmit a digital 406 MHz distress signal that contains a unique 15-digit identifier to the Cospas-Sarsat Satellite System.



If you own a Category 1 or 2 EPIRB, you MUST register it. It is the law. Category 1s are water activated and Category 2s are manually activated. It is now easier than ever to file or update your information at <http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov/beacon.html>. If you bought a 406 EPIRB, the newer kind, changed addresses/phone numbers, or lost touch with your designated contacts, you can do it all online or print out the form and fax or mail it.

If your EPIRB is lost or stolen, inform the National Oceanic and Aerospace Administration (NOAA) immediately at 1-888-212-SAVE (7283) that your beacon has been lost. They will update the information and save you the consequences of an accidental activation. If someone attempts to register a beacon reported as stolen, NOAA will notify the appropriate Police Department.

Here is a quick checklist of things to do help insure your EPIRB will properly work.

- Check your battery's expiration date. Replace as necessary.
- Perform a self-test. Most EPIRB's have a built-in test routine.
- Confirm that your EPIRB is properly registered with NOAA and that registration information is up to date, using an ID EPIRB tester.
- Verify that your EPIRB is FCC certified for Global Maritime Distress Safety System (GMDSS).

Make sure that the EPIRB is registered to the boat that it is on. That will avoid needless wild sea gull chases like what happened in the Marblehead to Halifax race, a few years ago. There an EPIRB, that was not registered to the boat it was on, fell overboard and set off a needless search for a boat that was not in the area. The Canadian Coast Guard was not happy.

Compared to a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), the EPIRB has a bigger battery and will last longer. The EPIRB is also activated by water, which the PLB is not. It is a one way device, you cannot communicate using it.