



# Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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## Registration of Distress Alert Devices & Cancelling False Distress Alerts

Mariners are reminded of their obligation to register distress alert devices, keep registration details current (such as contact information), and be familiar with how to deactivate the device or cancel the distress alert if mistakenly activated.

According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Incident History Database (IHDB), the chart below depicts the number of distress alerts vs. false alerts that occurred from 2020-2024 from distress alert devices:

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Distress Alerts	88	78	80	60	104
False Alerts	2014	1971	2209	2066	2149

The below information provides important guidance regarding the registration of distress alert devices and the procedures for canceling false distress alerts. Accurate registration and prompt cancellation of false distress alerts are crucial for maintaining maritime safety, ensuring search and rescue resources are used efficiently, and preventing unnecessary disruptions.

### Registration of Distress Alert Devices

Distress alert devices, such as EPIRBs (406 MHz satellite Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon), PLBs (Personal Locator Beacons), SARTs (Search and Rescue Transponders), Digital Selective Calling (DSC) with a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number for marine radios and Inmarsat ship earth stations are essential tools for distress signaling. The registration of these devices is a critical step to ensure effective and rapid rescue in an emergency. It is essential to keep registration details current, especially if your vessel changes ownership or your emergency contact details change. The below links provide additional information about registering distress alert devices:

- **EPIRB, PLB & SART Registration:** [US Beacon Registration](#)
- **For MMSI on Marine Radios & Inmarsat:** [MMSI | Federal Communications Commission](#)

For MMSI registration, it is highly encouraged to have a licensed FCC technician program the MMSI on your marine radios and Inmarsat, as these devices do not allow for correction to accidental entries. Remember that registration information should be available for verification by the Coast Guard Boarding Officers and Marine Inspectors and updated promptly after any major changes. Proper registration of your EPIRB is intended to save your life and is mandated by Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations. The Coast Guard is continuing to enforce the FCC registration rule.

### Cancelling False Distress Alerts

False distress alerts, whether accidental or deliberate, can result in unnecessary deployments of search and rescue resources, potentially diverting attention from real emergencies. The main reasons for false alerts

include beacon mishandling or malfunction, mounting failures, environmental conditions, improper disposal, or accidentally pressing the DSC button on your marine radio or Inmarsat. While not all false alerts can be prevented, it is critically important to cancel an alert if you know it is accidental or unintentional. The procedures for canceling false distress alerts are found in the Federal Communications Commission regulations (Title 47 Code of Federal Regulations 80.335). The following link will take you to this regulation, which gives step-by-step instructions on what to do for the distress alert devices listed above.

- **Canceling false distress alerts:** [Procedures for canceling false distress alerts.](#)

In the event of an accidental distress alert, it is vital to ensure that contact information in the distress device registration is up to date. If a Rescue Coordination Center is unable to reach a representative for the vessel, it will result in the unnecessary launching of resources, whether federal, state or local.

If your company or vessel utilizes a Safety Management System or a Towing Safety Management System, it is highly encouraged to incorporate these procedures to ensure compliance with the regulations.

Questions regarding these requirements should be sent to the Coast Guard Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance, by email at [CG-CVC@uscg.mil](mailto:CG-CVC@uscg.mil)

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