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Subject: [auxpao] For Immediate Release: WHAT IF YOU CALL 911 AND NO ONE EVER ANSWERS?
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All, please give the press release the widest possible distribution both internally and externally.

Regards,

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U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

PRESS RELEASE

May 2, 2008

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WHAT IF YOU CALL 911 AND NO ONE EVER ANSWERS?

Starting February 1, 2009 that is exactly what will happen for boaters who have the older model EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons) that transmit a distress alert on 121.5 MHz or 243 MHz. The activation of an EPIRB is like making a 911 call to search and rescue authorities. After February 1, 2009 the older model EPIRBs will no longer be monitored by satellite, and are likely to go completely undetected in an emergency. Only distress alerts from 406 MHz beacons will continue to be detected and processed by search and rescue satellites worldwide. Although February 1, 2009 is still a long time

from now, the traditional start of the 2008 boating season is just a couple of weeks away and while preparing for the season the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary recommends that the new EPIRBs be part of the *season start-up* shopping list.

Although recreational boaters are not required to carry an EPIRB, they are strongly recommended for ALL boaters, including kayaks and other paddle craft, along with a VHF-FM marine band radio. The 406 MHz signal sent by the newer EPIRBs when a mariner encounters distress are picked up by the COSPAS/SARSAT satellite constellation, which determines the EPIRBs position through triangulation. EPIRBs with embedded GPS are even more helpful in quickly finding a distressed boater. With GPS coordinates, the position of distress is pinpointed almost immediately. Without GPS, it may take two or three satellite passes to come up with a good, triangulated position. According to Captain Chip Strangfeld, Commander of Coast Guard Sector San Diego, "the time saved by EPIRBs could mean the difference between life and death."

As long as the new 406 MHz beacon has been registered (which is required by law), search and rescue authorities can quickly confirm that the distress is real, who they are looking for, and a description of the vessel or aircraft. This means an effective search can be initiated even before a final distress location has been determined for non-GPS EPIRBs. It also means that a false activation may be resolved with a phone call to the beacon owner, saving resources for actual distresses.

Registration is free and can be done on the internet at: www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov or it can be mailed/faxed to NOAA by calling 1-888-212-SAVE. Beacon registrations must be updated at least every two years or when information such as emergency contact phone numbers and other vital information changes. This registration information is only available to authorized search and rescue personnel. It saves lives.

For more potentially life-saving information along with how to take a boating safety course or get a free vessel safety check from the Coast Guard Auxiliary visit http://www.uscgboating.org/. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed civilian component of the United States Coast Guard. Created by an Act of Congress in 1939, the Auxiliary directly supports the Coast Guard in all missions, except military and direct law enforcement actions. The Coast Guard Auxiliary is an integral part of the United States Coast Guard. For more information visit www.cgaux.org if you are ready to join visit http://join.cgaux.org/ .

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