

M.S. Notice 5 of 2000

Subject : False Distress Alerts from EPIRBs

Subsequent to M.S. Notice Nos. 5 of 1998, 14 of 1998, 18 of 1998, 19 of 1998 and 7 of 1999, on the above subject, the false activation of EPIRBs continues unabated. In recent past, a false distress alert due to accidental activation of EPIRB was detected during its transportation. The EPIRB kept radiating till the battery got exhausted. In the referred incident the guidelines prescribed in IMO resolution A 814 (19) for handling of EPIRB were not adhered to. The Directorate expresses its serious concern over the manner in which the EPIRB was handled. The false distress alerts not only impose considerable and unnecessary expenditures and wastage of manpower but also have serious impact on real distress situation and on safety of life at sea.

2. The Directorate General of Shipping once again having noticed that excessive number of false distress alert imposes a considerable and unnecessary burden on rescue Co-ordination centers (RCCs), leading to adverse effect on seafarers confidence in the GMDSS and serious impact on real distress situation, A. Draws attention of ship owners, ship masters and crew to guidelines for the avoidance of false distress alert as prescribed in IMO Resolution A 814(19). B. Further draws attention of manufacturers, suppliers and installers to above referred resolution. C. Draws attention of ship owners, ship masters and crew to IMO publication "Procedures for Port State Control" wherein it is stated that non-familiarity of master of crew members with essential shipboard procedures relating to the safety of ships will be considered as evidence of clear ground to conduct more detailed inspection. In view of rising number of false distress alert, the Directorate has decided to take following measures :-

(1) In accordance with above stated IMO resolution, it is the responsibility of manufacturers, suppliers and installers to ensure that the EPIRB is handled and transported to and fro between ship and service center or between a ship and a ship in a manner as prescribed. The approval of service station granted by the Directorate would be suspended / cancelled if a false distress alert is activated during the transportation of the EPIRB.

(2) A vessel would be subjected to detailed inspection during port state control in case of reported incidents of inadvertent transmission of false distress alert without proper cancellation or repeated or deliberate transmission of false distress alert on account of lack of operational knowledge required by master & crew.

(3) Appreciating that the false distress alerts not only impose considerable and unnecessary burden on national exchequer by putting into service of coast guard and / or aircraft but also adversely affect seafarer's confidence in GMDSS and can have serious impact on real life distress situation and safety of life at sea, the Directorate, while reiterating the views expressed in M.S. Notice Nos. 5 of 1998, 14 of 1998, 18 of 1998, 19 of 1998 and 7 of 1999, cautions all concerned that when a false distress alert is received and on investigation it is found that it has been transmitted due to sheer negligence and carelessness by the ship's crew or agents of the servicing station and all the monitoring agencies covering the vessel's area of operation are not immediately informed, then the recovery of actual costs involved in putting into service of Search and Rescue machineries will have to be borne by the defaulter in addition to any fine that may be imposed.

(4) In case of Indian vessels, incidents involving false distress must be reported to the Directorate by ship owners, manufacturers, suppliers and installers of EPIRBS.

Sd/-

(Capt. S. K. Mishra)

Nautical Surveyor

For Nautical Adviser to the Govt. of India