



STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS.

**S.I. No. 170 of 2012**



SIGNALS OF DISTRESS (SHIPS) RULES 2012.

**(Prn. A12/0835)**

## MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, TOURISM AND SPORT

I, LEO VARADKAR, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, in exercise of the powers conferred on me by section 36(1) of the Merchant Shipping (Safety Convention) Act 1952 (No. 29 of 1952) (as adapted by the Transport (Alteration of Name of Department and Title of Minister) Order 2011 (S.I. No. 141 of 2011)), hereby make the following rules:

1. These Rules may be cited as the Signals of Distress (Ships) Rules 2012.
2. The following signals are prescribed as the signals of distress to be used or exhibited by ships, either together or separately, to indicate distress and need of assistance:
  - (a) a gun or other explosive signals fired at intervals of about a minute;
  - (b) a continuous sounding with any fog-signalling apparatus;
  - (c) rockets or shells, throwing red stars fired one at a time at short intervals;
  - (d) a signal made by any signalling method consisting of the group ...----- (SOS) in the Morse Code;
  - (e) a signal sent by radiotelephony consisting of the spoken word "MAYDAY";
  - (f) the International Code Signal of distress indicated by N.C.;
  - (g) a signal consisting of a square flag having above or below it a ball or anything resembling a ball;
  - (h) flames on the vessel (as from a burning tar barrel, oil barrel, etc.);
  - (i) a rocket parachute flare or a hand-flare showing a red light;
  - (j) a smoke signal giving off orange-coloured smoke;
  - (k) slowly and repeatedly raising and lowering arms outstretched to each side;
  - (l) a distress alert by means of digital selective calling (DSC) transmitted on:
    - (i) VHF channel 70, or

*Notice of the making of this Statutory Instrument was published in "Iris Oifigiúil" of 29th May, 2012.*

- (ii) MF/HF on the frequencies 2187.5 kHz, 8414.5 kHz, 4207.5 kHz, 6312 kHz, 12577 kHz or 16804.5 kHz;
- (m) a ship-to-shore distress alert transmitted by the ship's Inmarsat or other mobile satellite service provider ship earth station;
- (n) signals transmitted by emergency position-indicating radio beacons;
- (o) approved signals transmitted by radiocommunications systems, including survival craft radar transponders.

3. A signal of distress prescribed by these Rules shall only be used for the purpose of indicating that a ship is in serious and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance from other ships or from the shore, and such signal shall only be sent by or on the authority of the master or other person for the time being in charge of—

- (a) a ship in serious and imminent danger, or
- (b) a ship which observes that another ship is not itself in a position to send the signal and where the master or other person for the time being in charge considers further assistance necessary.

4. When a ship has sent out a signal of distress by radio and the master or other person for the time being in charge subsequently finds that assistance is no longer required, he or she shall immediately notify all stations.

5. The regulations and procedures laid down by the International Telecommunication Union Radio Regulations shall, so far as applicable, be observed in the case of the signals of distress prescribed by these Rules.

6. The Signals of Distress (Ships and Watercraft on the Water) Rules 1977 (S.I. No. 234 of 1977) are revoked.



GIVEN under my Official Seal,  
24 May 2012.

LEO VARADKAR,  
Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

## EXPLANATORY NOTE.

*(This Note is not part of the Instrument and does not purport to be a legal interpretation.)*

These Rules prescribe the distress signals for ships and specify the circumstances in which such signals may be used. They revoke and replace the Signals of Distress (Ships and Water Craft on the Water) Rules 1977 (S.I. No. 234 of 1977). These Rules are based on the current Annex IV of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 (COLREGS) of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and apply also in the implementation of Chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). Note that, in addition to these Rules, attention should be given to the relevant section of the International Code of Signals, the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual, Volume III and the following signals:

- (a) a piece of orange-coloured canvas with either a black square or circle or other appropriate symbol (for identification from the air),
- (b) a dye marker.

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