



**SUBJECT: Registry and Maintenance of EPIRBs**

**REFERENCE:**

- a) *MSC Circ.1039 Guidelines for Shore-Based Maintenance of Satellite EPIRBs.*
- b) *MSC Circ.1040/Rev 1 Revised Guidelines on the Annual Testing of 406 MHZ Satellite EPIRBs.*
- c) *SOLAS IV.15.9.*

**TO:** Ship-owners, operators, masters and officers of Antigua and Barbuda flagged ships, and recognized organizations.

**1. PURPOSE**

This Circular provides information on the process for registering and maintaining Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs).

**2. APPLICATION**

This Circular applies to all Antigua and Barbuda flagged ships.

**3. BACKGROUND**

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) are required to be carried in:

- All commercial vessels over 300 GT.
- All vessels certified under the Caribbean Small Vessel (SCV) Code and engaged on voyages in exposed waters or on international voyages with more than 12 passengers.
- All vessels certificated under the Caribbean Cargo Ship Safety (CCSS) Code.
- All commercial yachts certified as being in compliance with the Large Yacht Code.
- Commercial yachts under 24 m complying with the M280 Code if operating at extended ranges.

In addition, many pleasure yachts voluntarily carry EPIRBs, and many are required to do so as a condition of their entry into races and other events. There are therefore a large number of EPIRBs in service on Antigua and Barbuda registered vessels.

For EPIRBs to function correctly it is important that the details of the vessel to which they are fitted are available to rescue services in order that the proper level of response can be arranged in the case of an emergency and so that false alerts can be quickly identified and cleared.

In the past Antigua and Barbuda operated with an informal system associated with the Bremen Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) in Germany for many Antigua and Barbuda flagged ships, but this arrangement did not fully cover vessels operating locally

in the Caribbean, nor did it cover yachts. To deal with this the Administration has now made arrangements with the International Cospas-Sarsat programme for the recording of beacon information directly on their database from where it can be accessed by all MRCCs world-wide. It is intended that this will replace the previous arrangements.

EPIRBs carried in compliance with, SOLAS, the two Caribbean Vessel Codes, and the two yacht codes are also required to be serviced and checked on an annual basis. This Circular sets out the requirements for servicing and maintenance and for recording beacon data for Antigua and Barbuda ships.

#### **4. OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **1. Maintenance and testing requirements.**

1. SOLAS chapter IV regulation 15.9.1 and 15.9.2 set out the essential requirements for EPIRB maintenance. Each EPIRB must be tested annually by an authorized shore-based service provider for all aspects of operational efficiency with an emphasis on checking emission operational frequencies, coding, and registration.

##### **2. The annual testing should take place:**

1. Within the 3 months before either the expiry date or the anniversary date of the ship's Cargo Ship Safety Radio certificate for ships of over 300 GT that carry this certificate;
2. Within the 3 months before the expiry and annually three months before the annual survey / inspection for vessels certificated under the Codes; or
3. Annually for all others.

- 3. The annual testing may be carried out on board** provided that each EPIRB must be submitted for maintenance at an approved shore-based service centre at intervals not exceeding 5 years. An approved shore-based service centre is accepted as one which is approved by the manufacturer of the EPIRB in question for the five-yearly maintenance.

##### **4. The annual check should include:**

1. Checking the position and mounting for float-free operation.
2. Verifying the presence of a firmly attached lanyard in good condition, neatly stowed and not attached to the vessel or the mounting bracket.
3. A visual inspection for defects.
4. A self-test routine.

5. A check that the EPIRB identification (15-digit HEX ID) and other information is clearly marked on the outside of the unit.
6. Decoding the transmitted signal and establishing that the decoded HEX ID information is identical to the information and identification marked on the beacon.
7. Checking the registration.
8. Checking the battery expiry date.
9. Checking the hydrostatic release expiry date.
10. Checking the emission in the 406 MHz band using self-test mode (or an appropriate device to avoid transmission of a distress call).
11. Checking that the EPIRB has been maintained (if due) by an approved shore-based service provider.
12. Remounting the beacon properly in its bracket.
13. Verifying the presence of operating instructions.

#### **5. Documentation.**

1. All ships should have on board, and available for inspection, the certificate of annual test for each EPIRB, and where appropriate, the certificate showing the last 5 yearly shore maintenance and service. These documents can be requested by PSC and will be required by the surveyor completing the annual Cargo Ship Safety radio certificate survey or the surveys for any of the Code certificates.

#### **6. Registration of EPIRBS.**

1. SOLAS Chapter IV Regulation 15 requires that the EPIRB registry should be checked at each radio survey. It is the policy of ADOMS that all EPIRBs should be registered.
2. Internationally there is the *International Cospas-Sarsat Programme* which is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1988 under the International Cospas-Sarsat Programme Agreement signed by Canada, France, the former USSR (now the Russian Federation), and the USA. Including the four Parties to the Agreement, a further 41 states and 2 organizations are now currently formally associated with the Programme and actively participate in the management and the operation of the System.
3. The mission of the programme is to provide accurate, timely and reliable distress alert and location data to help Search and Rescue (SAR) authorities assist persons in distress. The objective of the *Cospas-Sarsat System* is to reduce, as far as possible, delays in the provision of distress alerts to SAR services, and the

time required to locate a person in distress at sea or on land and provide assistance to that person, all of which have a direct impact on the probability of survival.

- 7. Antigua and Barbuda joined the other countries that participate in this system and has access to the international database.** The Administration appreciates that recording all the beacons in service in this system will take time, however with immediate effect the following procedures will apply:

**1. Newly purchased beacons:**

1. Whenever an EPIRB is purchased it normally comes with a “registration card” that card records the beacon ID and contains space to record the contact details for the ship and her managers.
2. The first preference for Antigua and Barbuda ships is for the owner or the manager to log on to <https://www.406registration.com> . On the home page there are two tabs – “LOGIN” and “REGISTRATION”, the owner should select “REGISTRATION”. This will open a page on which can be selected, either “I have one beacon to register” or “I have many beacons to register”. The user should select the correct choice and then select “OK”. This will open the data entry screen where the beacon ID can be entered as well as the ship data details associated with the owner and the ship.
3. The system will ask for a password and a security question, if the beacon has not been entered before the owner should select a password and a security question and enter them. Both should be recorded safely for future access to maintain the record. From this page it is a matter of entering the appropriate data as asked. Note that the field “Vehicle Registration Number” should be completed with the vessel’s Official Number.
4. Once a beacon is registered, the owner or manager should print out a copy of the registered particulars for placement on board the ship so that surveyors and inspectors may easily verify the beacon registry and the particulars.
5. In case of difficulty in completing the registry directly, it will be possible to scan and send the completed beacon registration card to ADOMS St. John’s. It should be sent to [registry@abregistry.ag](mailto:registry@abregistry.ag) with the header “EPIRB Registry”. Staff in the St. John’s office will, as quickly as possible, complete the registry and send back confirmation. However, applications sent this way must be fully complete with all the data for two emergency contacts, the ship’s details, etc. Incomplete data sets cannot be registered.
6. Owners should note that whenever there is a change in the beacon particulars, the vessel’s particulars, or the emergency contact information they should re-enter the system using their password and edit the details so that the system is always up to date.

**2. Existing beacons:**

1. Beacons that are already in service on Antigua and Barbuda ships should be registered in the system at the first opportunity following the procedure above.

**3. Procedure on sale of a vessel:**

1. Whenever a vessel equipped with an EPIRB is sold the registered owner should delete his registered particulars in the database and remind the new owner to re-register the EPIRB in his name.

**8. Records and Verification.**

1. It is the intention of ADOMS that all EPIRBs fitted on Antigua and Barbuda vessels will be registered through this system so that there will be a comprehensive record available to all SAR services in the event that a beacon is activated so that the seafarers at risk can be offered the best chance of rescue.
2. During annual safety inspections and surveys for any of the Caribbean Code vessels or for commercial yachts, the attending inspector or surveyor will expect to see and verify the registered particulars for the EPIRB.

**Issued by**

Antigua and Barbuda  
Department of Marine Services and Merchant Shipping  
(ADOMS) St. John's