

## Distress Alerting and Location

A letter from UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency:

Simon,

We spoke briefly this morning about the carriage of flares - thank you for your time.

As I mentioned, the MCA is taking a look at its policy of requiring vessels - including pleasure vessels 13.7m and longer - to carry flares, particularly in light of a new requirement for anyone purchasing non-wheelmarked rocket parachute flares to have "specialist knowledge" (that is, recognised training, experience of using rocket parachute flares, and valid liability insurance covering the use of flares). This requirement is contained in EU [Directive 2007/23/EC](#), which is implemented in the UK by the [Pyrotechnic Articles \(Safety\) Regulations 2010](#). We're keen to hear from representatives of the leisure sector about attitudes towards the mandatory carriage of flares.

In particular, we'd like to know ISAF's views on the following issues:

- 1) The degree to which flares are practical and useful in facilitating search and rescue, where we often draw a distinction between "distress alerting" (rocket parachute flares) and "locating" (handheld flares and smokes) capabilities. Do flares significantly increase safety in this context by providing either distress alert or locating capability that can't be achieved as effectively by other means?
- 2) Is there other equipment which could achieve similar effectiveness in terms of distress alerting and locating in a search and rescue context?
- 3) Any health and safety risks associated with flares, and how these compare to the search and rescue benefits.
- 4) The practicalities and costs of disposing of flares once they become time-expired.
- 5) The availability and cost of training and insurance that would enable leisure users to meet the requirements of "specialist knowledge" before they may be sold rocket parachute flares under the Directive and UK Regulations.
- 6) Any other concerns that leisure users might have with the mandatory carriage of flares.

I would appreciate any comments that ISAF would like to make on this issue. Please let me know if you'd like to discuss it further.

Kind regards,  
Adam Paine.

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