



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

Safer lives,
safer ships,
cleaner seas

Life Saving Signals

**For use by ships, aircraft or persons
in distress when communicating
with rescue units**



Life Saving Signals

To be used by ships, aircraft or persons in distress, when communicating with life-saving stations, maritime rescue units and aircraft engaged in search and rescue operations.

Search and rescue unit replies

You have been seen, assistance will be given as soon as possible.



Orange smoke flare.



Three white star signals or three light and sound rockets fired at approximately 1 minute intervals.

Surface to air signals

Message	ICAO/IMO Visual Signals
Require assistance	V
Require medical assistance	X
No or negative	N
Yes or affirmative	Y
Proceeding in this direction	↑

Note: Use International Code of Signals by means of lights or flags or by laying out the symbol on the deck or ground with items which have a high contrast to the background.

Air to surface direction signals

Sequence of 3 manoeuvres meaning proceed to this direction.



Circle vessel at least once.



Cross low, ahead a vessel rocking wings.



Overfly vessel and head in required direction.

Your assistance is no longer required.

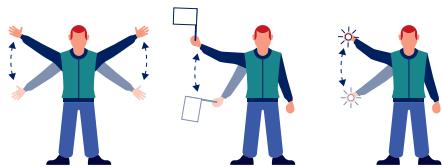


Cross low, astern of vessel rocking wings.

Note: As a non preferred alternative to rocking wings, varying engine tone or volume may be used.

Shore to ship signals

Safe to land here.



Vertical waving of both arms, white flag, light or flare.

Morse code alternatives

Morse code signals by light or sound.



Landing here is dangerous.

Additional signals mean safer landing in direction indicated.



Horizontal waving of white flag, light or flare. Putting one flag, light or flare on ground and moving off with a second indicates direction of safer landing.

Morse code alternatives

Morse code signals by light or sound.



Land to the right of your current heading.

Land to the left of your current heading.

Air to surface replies

Message understood.



Drop a message.



Rocking wings.



Flashing landing or navigation lights on and off twice.

Morse code alternatives

Morse code signals by light.



Message not understood – repeat.



Straight and level flight.



Circling.

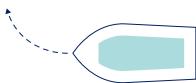
Morse code alternatives

Morse code signals by light.

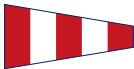


Surface to air replies

Message understood – I will comply.



Change course to required direction.



Code and answering pendant "Close Up".

Morse code alternatives

Morse code signals by light.



I am unable to comply.



International flag "N".

Morse code alternatives

Morse code signals by light.



Note: Use the signal most appropriate to prevailing conditions.



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The signals illustrated in this leaflet are those to be used by any ship or person in distress when communicating with search and rescue units. They have been agreed internationally for this purpose and it is important that you are familiar with them to ensure they are correctly used in distress situations.

The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS), as amended, in Regulation 29 of Chapter V requires you to have access to this table. You are advised to keep a copy on board, or if this is not practicable, at least to study the table before you go boating.

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