

Could you please (through your respective Clubs, Class Associations and Training Schools) make OA's that are organising events to Qld waters after 1st November 2008, aware that all vessels will require a 406 EPIRB as follows:

For any ship operating more than 2 nm from land will need to readdress its safety equipment. As you probably know the existing EPIRBs that are 121.5 must be replaced by new 406MHz EPIRBs by November 2008.

The statutory underpinning for this change is found in

TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (MARINE SAFETY) REGULATION 2004 - SECT 9

9 All ships in Queensland waters to be equipped with EPIRB

(1) This section applies to a ship in Queensland waters other than a ship

- (a) in smooth waters; or
- (b) in partially smooth waters; or
- (c) within 2n miles from land.

(2) The ship must be equipped with an EPIRB that--

- (a) complies with AS/NZS 4330--1995; or
- (b) is classified as category 1 under AS/NZS 4280--1995, section 2.1.2(a) and complies with the standard.

(3) An EPIRB that complies with AS/NZS 4330--1995 or 4280--1995 is safety equipment to which section 44 of the Act applies.

An extract from www.msq.qld.gov.au is in the following terms

EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons)

All ships operating beyond smooth and partially smooth waters must carry an EPIRB if more than two nautical miles from land.

An EPIRB is an important distress signalling and position-indicating device. It emits a two-tone radio signal that may be picked up by aircraft and satellites.

If it is a requirement to carry an EPIRB as part of your [safety equipment](#), from 1 November 2008, it must be a 406 MHz digital EPIRB.

You must [register your 406 MHz beacon](#)* with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority must also be advised of any change to ownership and vessel details.

[More information about the 121.5 MHz EPIRB phase out \(PDF**, 62KB\).](#)

The most common types of EPIRBs are the analogue 121.5 MHz and digital 406MHz.

While in principal both of these EPIRBs do the same thing, the 406 MHz is far superior and has the following advantages:

- Timeliness - search and rescue authorities alerted much more quickly. Within three minutes by the Geostationary satellites and on average within 90 minutes using the orbiting satellites compared with up to five hours with the 121.5 MHz.
- More accurate positioning – 5 kms is the typical accuracy and is improved to about 120 metres with a built in GPS as compared to within 20 km for a 121.5 MHz.
- Identifies the unit in trouble – units can be registered to an international database at Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) which records ship details to aid rescue and minimises false alerts. The 121.5 MHz has no identifier to assist search and rescue.
- More reliable - higher powered, more robust, aural/visual monitor (strobe light to assist night rescue), less interference, digital transmission.

The 121.5/243 satellite service will be discontinued in February 2009.

To activate a 121.5 MHz EPIRB, switch it on, pull out the aerial and if possible use the lanyard to tie it to the boat or yourself and place it in the water (this improves the signal).

406 MHz EPIRBs come in two different types. One requires manual activation, the other will automatically activate when submerged in water. To activate manually the antenna must be vertical. The on button is protected by a sliding door, which is fitted with a tamper seal. After three minutes a red light will flash, indicating the EPIRB is transmitting. It should have a clear view to the sky to maximise its signal. Those that activate automatically can also be activated manually and can be used if the ship is in imminent danger but is not sinking.

All EPIRB activations are treated as maydays and should only be used if the ship and or crew are in grave danger. They should be used as a last resort only. Other communications and signalling equipment like marine radios, flares, vsheet and mobile phone should be used first. Search and rescue authorities respond to all activations therefore it is important to let them know immediately if assistance is no longer required. There is no penalty for inadvertently activating an EPIRB but either radio the local volunteer marine radio organisation or call Rescue Coordination Centre's 24 hour emergency number on 1800 641 792. To avoid accidental activations store EPIRBs in an accessible place away from gear and passengers.

Like any electronic equipment, EPIRBs require extra care – they must be kept clean and in good condition. The battery must be replaced before the expiry date and, at this time, must be serviced by the manufacturer or an authorised agent. If the unit is unserviceable, dispose of it thoughtfully by either returning it to the manufacturer or agent. Unwanted EPIRBs can be disposed responsibly in the collection bins at any of the [Battery World](#)* stores around Australia.

Further information about EPIRBs and distress beacons can be found on the [AMSA](#)* website.

Register with Pains Wessex to receive a reminder of the expiry date of your EPIRB at <http://www.painswessex.com.au/>*