



Visual Distress Signals and the Private Boat Captain

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When I teach seamanship courses, I stress to the private boat captains that they have to imagine that they are astronauts who have landed on Mars. If something has gone wrong, it is going to take time for help to arrive so you have to start doing things to buy yourself more time. And when does the rescue clock start? When someone sees or hears your cry for help... So this starts a series that we will add to over the course of the coming Fall and Winter so that, by next Spring, you will be armed for what the sea gods present to you. And we start with getting that clock started as fast as possible - the visual distress signal.

USCG requirements for visual distress signals are:

- * Three hand-held red flares (day and night).
- * One hand-held red flare and two parachute flares (day and night).
- * One hand-held orange smoke signal, two floating orange smoke signals (day), and one electric distress light (night only).

In short, you need three USCG approved and unexpired flares or devices for day and night. Check the dates on the side of the flare. They are manufactured with 3 1/2 years of life. How long have they been on the shelf or in your cabin? By the way, are they still good after the expiration date? Most likely they are so keeping them around as back-up. But don't expect to pass a USCG boarding if they aren't "good to go" as the boarding officer looks at them.

All boaters should be able to signal for help and instructions for use are printed right on the device. What should you consider when doing so? First, unless you are truly "in extremis", don't set them off

unless you can see or hear help nearby (btw, if you can see lights on the land, that constitutes help nearby - just don't use them all in case no one is looking.) Shooting flares into a dark, empty sky might prove to be totally useless, especially if someone happens along later and you have no way to signal them. Secondly, if you are using hand held flares, hold them out over the boat. If a piece of the burning slag drops off and lands on your fiber glass deck, be prepared to watch it burn straight through to the sea below. You can't out put out the burning magnesium compound. Third, if a flare pistol or hand-held rocket propelled distress signal is used, be sure to take the wind into account. In generally calm winds, keep your arm at approximately 45-60 degrees above the horizon with the wind at your back. As the wind increases, increase the angle of your arm upwards but do not fire the device straight up or in such a direction that it may land on your boat (such as into the wind) or another boat...

As you can see, distress signals have distinct advantages and disadvantages. No single device is ideal under all conditions or suitable for all purposes. But pyrotechnics are universally recognized as excellent distress signals. However, there is potential for injury and property damage if not properly handled.

By USCG regulations, who is required to have these visual distress signals?

All vessels used on coastal waters, the Great Lakes, territorial seas, and those waters connected directly to them, up to a point where a body of water is less than two miles wide must be equipped with U.S.C.G. Approved visual distress signals. Vessels owned in the United States operating on the high seas

must be equipped with U.S.C.G. Approved visual distress signals. Regulations prohibit display of visual distress signals on the water under any circumstances except when assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons on board a vessel.

And who is not required to have these visual distress signals? The following vessels are not required to carry day signals but must carry night signals when operating from sunset to sunrise:

- * Recreational boats less than 16 feet in length.
- * Boats participating in organized events such as races, regattas, or marine parades.
- * Open sailboats less than 26 feet in length not equipped with propulsion machinery.
- * Manually propelled boats.

But think of our motto, "semper paratus" - always ready! Why go to sea in anything and be unable to call for help and get the rescue clock started?

And don't forget that the USCGAux gives FREE vessel safety exams. They are not a regulatory event - no one "turns you in" if the boat is missing something. We tell you what it is, generally give you our cell numbers so you can call us back when the deficiency has been addressed - and then get your windshield sticker that notes that your boat has met the federal standard for its size. The exam is all about safety of life at sea - yours and your loved ones...!

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at [DSO-HR<http://www.d1south.org/StaffPages/DSO-HR>](http://www.d1south.org/StaffPages/DSO-HR) and we will help you "get in this thing..."



County Clerk Update

by SUFFOLK COUNTY CLERK

JUDY PASCALE

COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE SUPPORTS FETAL HOPE FOUNDATION WITH "JEANS FOR HOPE"



County Clerk Pascale and County Clerk employees

Suffolk County Clerk Judy Pascale and the employees of the County Clerk's Office recently participated in the Fetal Hope Foundation's "Jeans for Hope" awareness program.

The Fetal Hope Foundation's mission is to provide support, provide information, fund research, increase awareness and be an outlet for leading medical information pertaining to fetal syndromes and arming families and healthcare providers with information and helping to save babies' lives. Fetal Hope was created to align a truly patient supported foundation to the leading fetal maternal medicine centers and doctors around the world, to support additional fetal syndromes that are not currently supported by other organizations, to provide factual medical information on fetal syndromes, to provide unconditional support to families dealing with these syndromes, and to provide an outlet for the fetal medicine centers and doctors to publish and inform the public on new technologies providing hope to save babies.

Employees in the Riverhead County Center showed support for this valuable cause by helping to raise money and create awareness by wearing "Jeans for Hope".

For more information about the Fetal Hope Foundation please visit fetalhope.org.

Legislator Tom Muratore Recognizes Middle Country Students in Substance Abuse Awareness Poster Contest



Legislator Tom Muratore (far right) joins Brookhaven Town Councilwoman Kathy Walsh and Knights of Columbus Chancellor Ed Lenox in congratulating poster contest winners Melissa Engh and Sarah Braxton.

Legislator Tom Muratore (R- Ronkonkoma) recently presented Certificates of Recognition to students in the Middle Country School District who participated in the Knights of Columbus' Substance Abuse Awareness poster contest. Students Melissa Engh and Sarah Braxton were recognized respectively as first place winners for alcohol and drug abuse awareness. Each student who participated was awarded with a certificate as well.

"I applaud the Middle Country School District, as well as the Knights of Columbus, Heart of the Island, Chapter 7262 in Selden for sponsoring the poster contest," stated Legislator Muratore. "It is crucial to remind young people how life threatening drug and alcohol abuse can be. These efforts are sure to make a difference in our community."

For any questions or concerns pertaining to the Fourth Legislative District, Legislator Tom Muratore urges you to contact his office by phone at 631-854-9292, or email tom.muratore@suffolkcountyny.gov.