



Visual Distress Signals & the Private Boat Captain

by VINCENT PICA

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When I teach seamanship courses, I stress to the private boat captains that they have to imagine they are astronauts who have landed on Mars. If something goes 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 that rescue clock start? When someone sees or hears your cry for help. This week's column begins a series that, by Spring, will prepare you for whatever the sea gods may send your way. And we start by getting that rescue clock started as fast as possible: the visual distress signal.

USCG requirements for visual distress signals are:

- Three handheld red flares (day and night).
- One handheld 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 each flare. How long have they been on the shelf or in your cabin? They are manufactured with 3 1/2 years of life. Most likely they are still good after the expiration date, so keep 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; instructions for use are printed right on the device. What should you consider when signalling? First, unless you are truly "in extremis," don't set off the

flares unless you can see or hear help nearby (by the way, if you can see lights on the land, that constitutes help nearby - just don't burn all your flares at once, 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 more flares to use to signal them. Secondly, if you are using handheld 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 cannot put out the burning magnesium compound. Third, if a flare pistol or handheld 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 can land on your boat (such as into the wind) or on 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...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... Regulations prohibit display of visual distress signals on the water under any circumstances except when assistance is required...

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 under 16'
- Boats participating in organized events such as races, regattas, or marine parades
- Open sailboats under 26' not equipped with propulsion machinery
- Manually propelled boats

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

Don't forget 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!

If you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at USCGAUX2006@aol.com or go direct to MaryJo Cruickshank, who is in charge of new members matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you "get in this thing."

Poetry under the Pines

by RANDY LAWSON

Poetry under the Pines, one might ask, what exactly is that? Reading poetry under a pine tree? In fact it is much more than just poetry.

On September 16, I had the pleasure of being part of a poetry workshop at the Manorville Pine Barrens Information Center in Manorville presented by the very knowledgeable writer and poet Tom Stock. My first thought as an avid writer of poetry was this was all about how to write poetry. What I discovered was much more than just poetry.

We gathered in a circle of about a dozen people, some having traveled from the far ends of Long Island to listen to and learn from Stock, who has a vibrant and friendly personality and a zest for life and the surrounding natural environment. Stock has a devotion to Long Island's Pine Barrens.

Mr. Stock opened his presentation with some common objects we might find in our very own backyards. Things we see, but tend to overlook as we carry on our day-to-day living. The pine cone, for example, but not just any pine cone, the pine cone from the Pitch Pine tree. We were given a brief introduction of the importance of this pine tree in our Pine Barrens - the very heat of a forest fire brings forth the seeds of the pitch pine, thus beginning the cycle of life anew. Then we read aloud short poems from the book "Cone Poems" by Stock, celebrating the Long Island Pine Barrens.

Also in the group was Mr. Maxwell Wheat, writer, poet, and teacher of the

Long Island Pine Barrens. Wheat opened his presentation with an excerpt of writings from Long Island native Walt Whitman. After a discussion, we took a short walk through the Manorville Pine Barrens, discussing the different plant life here, and the wildlife that lives within our very own backyards. We spoke about the beauty that surrounds us all and the importance of preserving Long Island's rich natural resources. To combine the beauty of the Pine Barrens with the art of poetry was not only creative but educational as well.

As the aforementioned Whitman wrote about Long Island:

Isle of sweet brooks of drinking water - healthy air and soil!

Isle of the salty shore and breeze and brine!

The workshop was one of a series. If you are interested in upcoming workshops, you can email Tom Stock at Tstock101939@netzero.com. Maxwell Wheat offers workshops to those 55+ to encourage them to continually grow.

You can reach him at maxwell11623@aol.com. To find out more information on our Pine Barrens you can visit the Manorville Pine Barrens Information Center, open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturdays and Sundays until the end of October. The center offers many informative and educational workshops. Upcoming events are posted on the kiosk on the grounds outside the center. Telephone 631.369.9768 or email pine-trails@hughes.net.

October 2006 - Moriches Inlet

The Time Offsets mentioned in the column are as follows:

Tidal Time Offsets from Moriches Inlet:	USCG Station	Potunk Point	Mastic Beach	Smith Pt Bridge
High Tide	+45 min	+4.5 hrs	+4.5 hrs	+3 hrs
Low Tide	+2 hrs	+5 hrs	+5 hrs	+4 hrs

Day	High	Low	High	Low	High	Moon
SEPT						
Wed 27		03:52	10:19	16:39	22:38	
Thu 28		04:23	11:03	17:24	23:32	
Fri 29		05:03	11:59	18:28		
Sat 30	00:34	06:05	13:01	19:46		Frst Qtr
OCT						
Sun 01	01:40	07:41	14:07	20:55		
Mon 02	02:49	09:02	15:15	21:53		
Tue 03	03:56	10:06	16:20	22:45		
Wed 04	04:57	11:03	17:19	23:33		
Thu 05	05:51	11:58	18:12			
Fri 06		00:22	06:40	12:52	19:02	Full
Sat 07		01:09	07:27	13:44	19:50	
Sun 08		01:55	08:13	14:35	20:40	
Mon 09		02:41	09:02	15:26	21:32	
Tue 10		03:28	09:53	16:16	22:28	
Wed 11		04:14	10:48	17:09	23:27	
Thu 12		05:05	11:46	18:09		
Fri 13	00:27	06:03	12:44	19:17		
Sat 14	01:26	07:13	13:43	20:25		
Sun 15	02:26	08:23	14:41	21:22		Last Qtr