

RESOLUTION 349 (REV.WRC-23)

Operational procedures for cancelling false distress alerts in the global maritime distress and safety system

The World Radiocommunication Conference (Dubai, 2023),

considering

- a) that the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), as amended, prescribes that ships subject to that Convention shall be fitted with global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS) equipment as appropriate;
- b) that non-SOLAS vessels are also being equipped with GMDSS equipment;
- c) that the transmission and relay of false distress alerts is a significant problem within the GMDSS,

noting

that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) refers to this operational procedure for cancelling false distress alerts in its documentation,

resolves

- 1 to urge administrations to take all necessary measures to avoid false distress alerts and to minimize the unnecessary burden on rescue organizations which occurs;
- 2 to urge administrations to encourage the correct use of GMDSS equipment, with particular attention to appropriate training;
- 3 to urge administrations to implement the operational procedures contained in the Annex to this Resolution;
- 4 that administrations should take any consequential appropriate action in this respect,

instructs the Secretary-General

to bring this Resolution to the attention of IMO.

ANNEX TO RESOLUTION 349 (REV.WRC-23)

Cancelling of false distress alerts

If a distress alert is inadvertently transmitted, the following steps shall be taken to cancel the distress alert.

1 VHF digital selective calling

- 1) Follow the instructions on the radio screen, if applicable, or
Switch off and switch on after 10 seconds, and follow the instructions on the radio screen, if applicable;
- 2) If the digital selective-calling (DSC) equipment is capable of cancellation, start the distress self-cancel operation in accordance with the most recent version of Recommendation ITU-R M.493;
- 3) Set to channel 16; and
- 4) Transmit a broadcast message to “All Stations” giving the ship’s name, call sign and maritime mobile service identity (MMSI), and cancel the false distress alert.

Example of message:

- the words “ALL STATIONS”, spoken three times;
- the words “THIS IS”;
- the name of the vessel, spoken three times;
- the call sign or other identification;
- the MMSI;
- the words “PLEASE CANCEL MY DISTRESS ALERT OF” followed by the time in UTC.

2 MF digital selective calling

- 1) Follow the instructions on the radio screen, if applicable, or
Switch off and switch on after 10 seconds, and follow the instructions on the radio screen, if applicable;
- 2) If the DSC equipment is capable of cancellation, start the distress self-cancel operation in accordance with the most recent version of Recommendation ITU-R M.493;
- 3) Tune for radiotelephony transmission on 2 182 kHz; and
- 4) Transmit a broadcast message to “All Stations” giving the ship’s name, call sign and MMSI, and cancel the false alert;

For example of message see section 1.

3 HF digital selective calling

- 1) Follow the instructions on the radio screen, if applicable; or
Switch off and switch on after 10 seconds, and follow the instructions on the radio screen, if applicable;
- 2) If the DSC equipment is capable of cancellation, start the distress self-cancel operation in accordance with the most recent version of Recommendation ITU-R M.493;
- 3) Tune for radiotelephony on the distress and safety frequency in each frequency band in which a false distress alert was transmitted (see Appendix 15); and
- 4) Transmit a broadcast message to “All Stations” giving the ship’s name, call sign and MMSI, and cancel the false alert on the distress and safety frequency in each frequency band in which the false distress alert was transmitted;

For example of message see section 1.

4 Ship earth station

Notify the appropriate rescue coordination centre that the alert is cancelled by sending a distress priority message. Provide ship name, call sign and ship earth station identity with the cancelled alert message.

Example of message by telegraphy:

- NAME, CALL SIGN, IDENTITY NUMBER, POSITION;
- Cancel my distress;
- Alert of DATE, TIME UTC;
- =Master+.

Example of message by radiotelephony:

- the words “ALL STATIONS”, spoken three times;
- the words “THIS IS”;
- the name of the vessel, spoken three times;
- the call sign or other identification;
- the identity number/MMSI;
- the words “PLEASE CANCEL MY DISTRESS ALERT OF” followed by the time in UTC.

5 Satellite emergency position indicating radiobeacon (EPIRB)

If for any reason a satellite emergency position indicating radiobeacon (EPIRB) is activated inadvertently or accidentally, immediately stop the inadvertent transmission and contact the appropriate rescue coordination centre through a coast station or land earth station and cancel the distress alert.

6 General

Notwithstanding the above, ships may use additional appropriate means available to them to inform the appropriate authorities that a false distress alert has been transmitted and should be cancelled.

No action will normally be taken against any ship or mariner for reporting and cancelling a false distress alert. However, in view of the serious consequences of false alerts, and the strict ban on their transmission, authorities may take actions in cases of repeated violation.