

ALBERT EMBANKMENT
LONDON SE1 7SR
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7735 7611 Fax: +44 (0)20 7587 3210

MSC.1/Circ.1210/Rev.1
21 November 2014

**GUIDANCE ON THE COSPAS-SARSAT
INTERNATIONAL 406 MHz BEACON REGISTRATION DATABASE**

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its ninety-fourth session (17 to 21 November 2014), recognizing the continuous importance of 406 MHz EPIRB registration databases to be available to SAR Authorities at all times, approved the *Revised guidance on Cospas-Sarsat International 406 MHz Beacon Registration Database* (IBRD) prepared by the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR), at its first session, as set out in the annex.

2 This circular revokes MSC.1/Circ.1210.

3 Member Governments are invited to bring the annexed guidance to the attention of all parties concerned.

ANNEX

GUIDANCE ON THE COSPAS-SARSAT INTERNATIONAL 406 MHz BEACON REGISTRATION DATABASE

Need for EPIRB registration and associated databases

1 Emergency position-indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs) perform distress alerting and other functions to support search and rescue (SAR) services covered by the 1979 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, as amended, for any person in distress at sea, and the 1974 International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), as amended, requires EPIRB carriage (chapter IV, regulation 7.6) and registration.

2 The provisions relevant to EPIRB registration in chapter IV, regulation 5-1 apply to all ships on all voyages, and are as follows:

"Each Contracting Government undertakes to ensure that suitable arrangements are made for registering global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS) identities and for making information on these identities available to rescue coordination centres on a 24-hour basis. Where appropriate, international organizations maintaining a registry of these identities shall be notified by the Contracting Government of these assignments."

3 It is crucial that 406 MHz EPIRBs be registered, and that the registration data be available to SAR authorities at all times. Experience has shown that EPIRB registration data is either critically important or otherwise often helpful in the majority of SAR cases involving an EPIRB alert.

4 406 MHz EPIRBs should be registered regardless of whether they are carried aboard ships or other marine craft, and registrations should be reinforced by national requirements.

5 It is essential that IMO Member States provide a readily-accessible mechanism (preferably one that is available by internet, as well as other conventional means) to enable EPIRB owners to fulfill their obligation to register the beacons, and to make this data available for SAR authorities 24-hours-per-day, seven-days-per-week for use in an emergency. Such arrangements can be implemented nationally, on a regional basis in cooperation with other Administrations, or by other suitable means. The Cospas-Sarsat International Beacon Registration Database is a facility available free of charge to enable beacon owners to directly register their beacons and/or to allow Administrations to upload their national registration data to ensure that it is available to SAR authorities worldwide on a 24-hours-per-day, seven-days-per-week basis.

International Beacon Registration Database

6 The International Cospas-Sarsat Programme processes 406 MHz EPIRB alerts and routes them to the identified SAR authorities. It also operates the International Beacon Registration Database (IBRD) for 406 MHz beacons, operational since January 2006.

7 The IBRD is hosted on the internet at www.406registration.com, with online help capabilities.

8 Cospas-Sarsat provides the IBRD as a readily-available means for beacon owners to register their beacons unless an alternative method of registration is required by their national Administration. The registration information contained in the IBRD, whether directly entered by beacon owners or uploaded from national registration databases maintained by Administrations, is available 24-hours-per-day, seven-days-per-week for assisting SAR Services in SAR operations. The IBRD is available free of charge to individuals directly registering beacons and to Administrations uploading or retrieving registration data.

9 Administrations that maintain their own national registers are encouraged to upload their registration data to the IBRD to make their national beacon registration data available as quickly and easily as possible to SAR personnel on a 24-hour basis.

10 The IBRD can be used not only for registering 406 MHz EPIRBs, but also 406 MHz emergency locator transmitters (ELTs) carried on board aircraft, and personal locator beacons (PLBs) designed for personal use.

Background

11 The Cospas-Sarsat 406 MHz system provides distress alerts that include the unique 15-character hexadecimal identification of the transmitting beacon. This beacon identification can be decoded to obtain information that includes:

- .1 the type of beacon, i.e. ELT, EPIRB or PLB;
- .2 the country code and identification data which form the unique beacon identification; and
- .3 the type of auxiliary radio locating (homing) device, e.g. 121.5 MHz transmitter.

12 If a beacon is properly registered, the 15-character hexadecimal identification of the beacon can be used to access additional information. Beacon registration databases can provide information of great use to SAR personnel, including:

- .1 specific owner identification information;
- .2 the make/model and identification of aircraft or vessel in distress;
- .3 communications equipment available;
- .4 the total number of persons onboard; and
- .5 emergency contact information.

13 To have this valuable information available to SAR authorities in an emergency, it must be available from either a national database available 24-hours-per-day, seven-days-per-week maintained by a national Administration and/or from the IBRD provided that the national Administration allows direct registration in the IBRD by beacon owners or the Administration uploads its registration data to the IBRD for access by other SAR authorities.

14 Registration of 406 MHz beacons is required in accordance with international regulations on SAR established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and by the SOLAS Convention. In addition, some countries have made 406 MHz beacon registration mandatory.

IBRD concept of operations

15 The IBRD is designed to support:

- .1 beacon owners who wish to directly register their beacons;
- .2 Administrations to make their registration data easily available to other SAR authorities in an emergency by uploading that information to the IBRD; and
- .3 SAR authorities that need to efficiently access beacon registration data to assist persons in distress.

16 Cospas-Sarsat has configured the IBRD to accept by default beacon registrations from beacon owners, unless the Administration associated with the beacon's country code(s) has advised Cospas-Sarsat that it:

- .1 operates a national database with a 24-hour point of contact and does not want EPIRBs with its country code(s) included in the IBRD; or
- .2 wishes to control the inclusion of beacons with its country code(s) in the IBRD.

Establishing an IBRD point of contact

17 Each Administration should provide Cospas-Sarsat with a national IBRD point of contact for coordinating use of the IBRD. This contact will decide the settings in the IBRD related to beacons with its country code and help to resolve problems arising with registration of beacons with that Administration's country code(s).

18 The national IBRD point of contact should be officially identified to the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat using a letter of the form that may be found at the Cospas-Sarsat website (www.cospas-sarsat.int – on the "Cospas-Sarsat Professionals" page choose the "Documents" tab, then "Document Templates, and select the "IBRD" tab). This letter must be signed by the Administration's IMO representative, or by its representative to Cospas-Sarsat or to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and sent to the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat. Based on the letter, the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat will allocate the requested user identifications and passwords to the Administration's national IBRD point of contact.

19 The request should specify whether user identification and passwords to be issued to the Administration's IBRD point of contact are required to:

- .1 enable the Administration to upload registration data about its beacons to the IBRD;
- .2 enable its SAR Services to access IBRD registration data in an emergency; and/or
- .3 make IBRD registration data available to authorized shore-based service facilities and vessel inspectors.

20 Passwords and user identifications will be sent via post to the national IBRD point of contact. The national IBRD point of contact must then forward the user identifications and passwords to those entities authorized by its Administration to access the IBRD.

21 It is critical that, at a minimum, passwords be requested for SAR Services to access beacon registration information in the IBRD during an emergency.

Providing details of your national beacon registry

22 If an Administration maintains its own national beacon registry and decides not to allow beacons with its country code(s) to be registered in the IBRD, the Administration should review the information provided on the Cospas-Sarsat website to the public (such as beacon owners) relating to its beacon-registration policies (please see the information contained on www.cospas-sarsat.int on the "Cospas-Sarsat Professionals" page choose the "Contact Lists" tab and select "406 MHz Beacon Register"). Please provide the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat immediately with any updates, as appropriate. This is a source very commonly used by beacon owners to learn where to register their beacons and, therefore, it is critically important that accurate information is provided in order to keep these web pages up to date.

23 Based on the information that Administrations provide, beacon owner who attempts to register a beacon on the IBRD will be advised through a "pop up" window on the IBRD website of how and/or where to register the beacon (based on the country code programmed into the beacon and the policies of that Administration reported to the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat).

24 If no information is available regarding a national beacon registry for an Administration, Cospas-Sarsat policy is to assume that no such registry exists and allow the direct registration in the IBRD by owners of beacons with that Administration's country code(s) (www.406registration.com).

National Administration control of beacon registration in the IBRD

25 If an Administration has elected to prohibit direct registration by owners of their beacons in the IBRD, but wishes upload to the IBRD some or all of its national beacon registration records, a national IBRD Point of Contact should be designated as described above so that the necessary arrangements can be made to enable the uploading of records.

26 The Administration will be able to upload in bulk its beacon registration data or, if desired, keep sole control of individual record inputs or updates. In that case, beacon owners who attempt to register beacons with that Administration's country code(s) will be directed by the IBRD website to the Administration's national website or point of contact for beacon registration.

Means of registration

27 Beacon registrations allowed on the IBRD only will be accepted via the online facilities of www.406registration.com and, under no circumstances can registrations be accepted in paper format nor by telephone, facsimile or any other communication facilities.

Other supported beacon types

28 In addition to EPIRBs, the IBRD supports two other types of beacons:

- .1 Emergency Locator Transmitters (ELTs), for use in aircraft; and

- .2 Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs), small beacons for individuals to carry or wear; these beacons sometimes may be used for purposes similar to an EPIRB or ELT, as allowed by local regulations and, therefore, sometimes may be coded to transmit distress messages that have the same content as an EPIRB or ELT, and/or registered as an EPIRB or ELT in the IBRD.

Further Information

29 Further information can be found at www.cospas-sarsat.int, or by email at dbadmin@406registration.com.
