



Ref. T2/6.03

MSC/Circ.862  
22 May 1998**CLARIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS IN IMO PERFORMANCE  
STANDARDS FOR GMDSS EQUIPMENT**

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its sixty-ninth session (11 to 20 May 1998), approved the following clarifications of certain requirements in IMO performance standards for GMDSS equipment, developed by the Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR), at its third session (23 to 27 February 1998), with a view to reducing the number of false distress alerts. The Committee was of the opinion that such clarifications would assist Member Governments in deciding whether equipment installed on or after 1 February 1999 meets these requirements.

.1 "DEDICATED DISTRESS BUTTON"

This button should not be any key of an ITU-T input panel or an ISO keyboard associated with the equipment and should be physically separated from functional buttons/keys used for normal operation. This button should be a single button for no other purpose than to initiate a distress alert.

.2 "CLEARLY IDENTIFIED"

The distress button should be red in colour and marked "DISTRESS". Where a non-transparent protective lid or cover is used, it should also be marked "DISTRESS".

.3 "PROTECTED AGAINST INADVERTENT ACTIVATION"

The required protection of the distress button should consist of a spring loaded lid or cover permanently attached to the equipment by e.g., hinges. It should not be necessary for the user to remove additional seals or to break the lid or cover in order to operate the distress button.

The operation of the distress button should generate a visible and audible indication. The distress button should be kept pressed for at least 3 seconds. A flashing light and an intermittent acoustic signal should start immediately. After the 3 seconds the transmission of the distress alert is initiated and the indication should become steady.

.4 "AT LEAST TWO INDEPENDENT ACTIONS"

Lifting of the protective lid or cover is considered as the first action. Pressing the distress button as specified above is considered as the second independent action.

.5 "INTERRUPTING THE DISTRESS ALERT AT ANY TIME"

It should be possible to interrupt repetitive transmissions of distress messages. Such operation should not interrupt the transmission of a distress alert or distress message in progress but should prevent repetitive transmissions of a distress message.

2 Member Governments are invited to bring the above clarifications to the attention of radio equipment manufacturers, shipowners, seafarers and all others concerned.