

CHAPTER VII

Distress and safety communications¹

¹ **C.VII** For the purposes of this Chapter, distress and safety communications include distress, urgency and safety calls and messages.

ARTICLE 30

General provisions**Section I – Introduction**

30.1 § 1 This Chapter contains the provisions for the operational use of the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS), whose functional requirements, system elements and equipment carriage requirements are set forth in the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, as amended. This Chapter also contains provisions for initiating distress, urgency and safety communications by means of radiotelephony on the frequency 156.8 MHz (VHF channel 16). (WRC-07)

30.2 § 2 No provision of these Regulations prevents the use by a mobile station or a mobile earth station in distress of any means at its disposal to attract attention, make known its position, and obtain help (see also No. **4.9**).

30.3 § 3 No provision of these Regulations prevents the use by stations on board aircraft, ships engaged in search and rescue operations, land stations, or coast earth stations, in exceptional circumstances, of any means at their disposal to assist a mobile station or a mobile earth station in distress (see also Nos. **4.9** and **4.16**).

Section II – Maritime provisions

30.4 § 4 The provisions specified in this Chapter are obligatory in the maritime mobile service and the maritime mobile-satellite service for all stations using the frequencies and techniques prescribed for the functions set out herein (see also No. **30.5**). (WRC-07)

30.5 § 5 The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974 as amended, prescribes which ships and which of their survival craft shall be provided with radio equipment, and which ships shall carry portable radio equipment for use in survival craft. It also prescribes the requirements which shall be met by such equipment.

RR30-2

30.6 § 6 Ship earth stations located at rescue coordination centres¹ may be authorized by an administration to communicate for distress and safety purposes with any other station using bands allocated to the maritime mobile-satellite service, when special circumstances make it essential, notwithstanding the methods of working provided for in these Regulations.

30.7 § 7 Mobile stations² of the maritime mobile service may communicate, for safety purposes, with stations of the aeronautical mobile service. Such communications shall normally be made on the frequencies authorized, and under the conditions specified in Section I of Article 31 (see also No. 4.9).

Section III – Aeronautical provisions

30.8 § 8 The procedure specified in this Chapter is obligatory for communications between stations on board aircraft and stations of the maritime mobile-satellite service, wherever this service or stations of this service are specifically mentioned.

30.9 § 9 Certain provisions of this Chapter are applicable to the aeronautical mobile service, except in the case of special arrangements between the governments concerned.

30.10 § 10 Mobile stations of the aeronautical mobile service may communicate, for distress and safety purposes, with stations of the maritime mobile service in conformity with the provisions of this Chapter.

30.11 § 11 Any station on board an aircraft required by national or international regulations to communicate for distress, urgency or safety purposes with stations of the maritime mobile service that comply with the provisions of this Chapter, shall be capable of transmitting and receiving class J3E emissions when using the carrier frequency 2 182 kHz, or class J3E emissions when using the carrier frequency 4 125 kHz, or class G3E emissions when using the frequency 156.8 MHz and, optionally, the frequency 156.3 MHz.

30.11A § 11A Aircraft, when conducting search and rescue operations, are also permitted to operate digital selective calling (DSC) equipment on the VHF DSC frequency 156.525 MHz, and automatic identification system (AIS) equipment on the AIS frequencies 161.975 MHz and 162.025 MHz. (WRC-07)

¹ **30.6.1** The term “rescue coordination centre”, as defined in the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (1979) refers to a unit responsible for promoting the efficient organization of search and rescue services and for coordinating the conduct of search and rescue operations within a search and rescue region.

² **30.7.1** Mobile stations communicating with the stations of the aeronautical mobile (R) service in bands allocated to the aeronautical mobile (R) service shall conform to the provisions of the Regulations which relate to that service and, as appropriate, to any special arrangements between the governments concerned by which the aeronautical mobile (R) service is regulated.

Section IV – Land mobile provisions

30.12 § 12 Stations of the land mobile service in uninhabited, sparsely populated or remote areas may, for distress and safety purposes, use the frequencies provided for in this Chapter.

30.13 § 13 The procedure specified in this Chapter is obligatory for stations of the land mobile service when using frequencies provided in these Regulations for distress and safety communications.

ARTICLE 31

Frequencies for the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS)**Section I – General**

31.1 § 1 The frequencies to be used for the transmission of distress and safety information under the GMDSS are contained in Appendix 15. In addition to the frequencies listed in Appendix 15, ship stations and coast stations should use other appropriate frequencies for the transmission of safety messages and general radiocommunications to and from shore-based radio systems or networks. (WRC-07)

31.2 § 2 Any emission causing harmful interference to distress and safety communications on any of the discrete frequencies identified in Appendix 15 is prohibited. (WRC-07)

31.3 § 3 The number and duration of test transmissions shall be kept to a minimum on the frequencies identified in Appendix 15; they should be coordinated with a competent authority, as necessary, and, wherever practicable, be carried out on artificial antennas or with reduced power. However, testing on the distress and safety calling frequencies should be avoided, but where this is unavoidable, it should be indicated that these are test transmissions.

31.4 § 4 Before transmitting for other than distress purposes on any of the frequencies identified in Appendix 15 for distress and safety, a station shall, where practicable, listen on the frequency concerned to make sure that no distress transmission is being sent.

31.5 Not used.

Section II – Survival craft stations

31.6 § 5 1) Equipment for radiotelephony use in survival craft stations shall, if capable of operating on any frequency in the bands between 156 MHz and 174 MHz, be able to transmit and receive on 156.8 MHz and at least one other frequency in these bands.

31.7 2) Equipment for transmitting locating signals from survival craft stations shall be capable of operating in the 9200-9500 MHz band.

31.8 3) Equipment with digital selective calling facilities for use in survival craft shall, if capable of operating:

31.9 a) in the bands between 1606.5 kHz and 2850 kHz, be able to transmit on 2187.5 kHz; (WRC-03)

31.10 b) in the bands between 4000 kHz and 27500 kHz, be able to transmit on 8414.5 kHz;

31.11 c) in the bands between 156 MHz and 174 MHz, be able to transmit on 156.525 MHz.

Section III – Watchkeeping

31.12 *A – Coast stations*

31.13 § 6 Those coast stations assuming a watch-keeping responsibility in the GMDSS shall maintain an automatic digital selective calling watch on frequencies and for periods of time as indicated in the information published in the List of Coast Stations and Special Service Stations (List IV). (WRC-07)

31.14 *B – Coast earth stations*

31.15 § 7 Those coast earth stations assuming a watch-keeping responsibility in the GMDSS shall maintain a continuous automatic watch for appropriate distress alerts relayed by space stations.

31.16 *C – Ship stations*

31.17 § 8 1) Ship stations, where so equipped, shall, while at sea, maintain an automatic digital selective calling watch on the appropriate distress and safety calling frequencies in the frequency bands in which they are operating. Ship stations, where so equipped, shall also maintain watch on the appropriate frequencies for the automatic reception of transmissions of meteorological and navigational warnings and other urgent information to ships. (WRC-07)

31.18 2) Ship stations complying with the provisions of this Chapter should, where practicable, maintain a watch on the frequency 156.8 MHz (VHF channel 16). (WRC-07)

31.19 *D – Ship earth stations*

31.20 § 9 Ship earth stations complying with the provisions of this Chapter shall, while at sea, maintain watch except when communicating on a working channel.

ARTICLE 32

Operational procedures for distress and safety communications in the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS) (WRC-07)**Section I – General**

32.1 § 1 Distress communications rely on the use of terrestrial MF, HF and VHF radiocommunications and communications using satellite techniques. Distress communications shall have absolute priority over all other transmissions. The following terms apply:

- a)* The distress alert is a digital selective call (DSC) using a distress call format, in the bands used for terrestrial radiocommunication, or a distress message format, in which case it is relayed through space stations.
- b)* The distress call is the initial voice or text procedure.
- c)* The distress message is the subsequent voice or text procedure.
- d)* The distress alert relay is a DSC transmission on behalf of another station.
- e)* The distress call relay is the initial voice or text procedure for a station not itself in distress. (WRC-07)

32.2 § 2 1) The distress alert shall be sent through a satellite either with absolute priority in general communication channels, on exclusive distress and safety frequencies reserved for satellite EPIRBs in the Earth-to-space direction or on the distress and safety frequencies designated in the MF, HF and VHF bands for digital selective calling (see Appendix 15). (WRC-07)

32.2A 1A) The distress call shall be sent on the distress and safety frequencies designated in the MF, HF and VHF bands for radiotelephony. (WRC-07)

32.3 2) The distress alert or call and subsequent messages shall be sent only on the authority of the person responsible for the ship, aircraft or other vehicle carrying the mobile station or the mobile earth station. (WRC-07)

32.4 § 3 All stations which receive a distress alert or call transmitted on the distress and safety frequencies in the MF, HF and VHF bands shall immediately cease any transmission capable of interfering with distress traffic and prepare for subsequent distress traffic. (WRC-07)

32.5 § 4 Distress alerts or distress alert relays using DSC should use the technical structures and content set forth in the most recent version of Recommendations ITU-R M.493 and ITU-R M.541. (WRC-07)

RR32-2

32.5A § 4A Each administration shall ensure that suitable arrangements are made for assigning and registering identities used by ships participating in the GMDSS, and shall make registration information available to rescue coordination centres on a 24-hour day, 7-day week basis. Where appropriate, administrations shall notify responsible organizations immediately of additions, deletions and other changes in these assignments (see Nos. **19.39**, **19.96** and **19.99**). Registration information submitted shall be in accordance with Resolution **340 (WRC-97)***. (WRC-07)

32.5B § 4B Any GMDSS shipboard equipment which is capable of transmitting position coordinates as part of a distress alert and which does not have an integral electronic position-fixing system receiver shall be interconnected to a separate navigation receiver, if one is installed, to provide that information automatically. (WRC-07)

32.6 § 5 Transmissions by radiotelephony shall be made slowly and distinctly, each word being clearly pronounced to facilitate transcription.

32.7 § 6 The phonetic alphabet and figure code in Appendix **14** and the abbreviations and signals in accordance with the most recent version of Recommendation ITU-R M.1172 should be used where applicable¹. (WRC-03)

Section II – Distress alerting and distress calling (WRC-07)

32.8 A – General

32.9 § 7 1) The transmission of a distress alert or a distress call indicates that a mobile unit² or person³ is threatened by grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance. (WRC-07)

32.10 2) The distress alert shall provide⁴ the identification of the station in distress and its position.

* *Note by the Secretariat:* This Resolution has been suppressed by WRC-07. The subject matter is now covered by Resolution **355 (WRC-07)**.

¹ **32.7.1** The use of the Standard Marine Communication Phrases and, where language difficulties exists, the International Code of Signals, both published by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), is also recommended.

² **32.9.1** Mobile unit: a ship, aircraft or other vehicle.

³ **32.9.2** In this Article, where the case is of a person in distress, the application of the procedures may require adaptation to meet the needs of the particular circumstances.

32.9.3 (SUP - WRC-07)

⁴ **32.10.1** The distress alert may also contain information regarding the nature of the distress, the type of assistance required, the course and speed of the mobile unit, the time that this information was recorded and any other information which might facilitate rescue.

32.10A § 7A 1) A distress alert is false if it was transmitted without any indication that a mobile unit or person was in distress and required immediate assistance (see No. **32.9**). Administrations receiving a false distress alert shall report this infringement in accordance with Section V of Article **15**, if that alert:

- a) was transmitted intentionally;
- b) was not cancelled in accordance with No. **32.53A** and Resolution **349 (WRC-97)**;
- c) could not be verified as a result of either the ship's failure to keep watch on appropriate frequencies in accordance with Nos. **31.16** to **31.20**, or its failure to respond to calls from an authorized rescue authority;
- d) was repeated; or
- e) was transmitted using a false identity.

Administrations receiving such a report shall take appropriate steps to ensure that the infringement does not recur. No action should normally be taken against any ship or mariner for reporting and cancelling a false distress alert. (WRC-07)

32.10B 2) Administrations shall take practicable and necessary steps to ensure the avoidance of false distress alerts, including those transmitted inadvertently. (WRC-07)

32.11 *B – Transmission of a distress alert or a distress call* (WRC-07)

B1 – Transmission of a distress alert or a distress call by a ship station
or a ship earth station (WRC-07)

32.12 § 8 Ship-to-shore distress alerts or calls are used to alert rescue coordination centres via coast stations or coast earth stations that a ship is in distress. These alerts are based on the use of transmissions via satellites (from a ship earth station or a satellite EPIRB) and terrestrial services (from ship stations and EPIRBs). (WRC-07)

32.13 § 9 1) Ship-to-ship distress alerts are used to alert other ships in the vicinity of the ship in distress and are based on the use of digital selective calling in the VHF and MF bands. Additionally, the HF band may be used. (WRC-07)

32.13A 2) Ship stations equipped for digital selective calling procedures may transmit a distress call and distress message immediately following the distress alert in order to attract attention from as many ship stations as possible. (WRC-07)

32.13B 3) Ship stations not equipped for digital selective calling procedures shall, where practical, initiate the distress communications by transmitting a radio telephony distress call and message on the frequency 156.8 MHz (VHF channel 16). (WRC-07)

32.13BA § 9A The radiotelephone distress signal consists of the word MAYDAY pronounced as the French expression "m'aider". (WRC-07)

RR32-4

32.13C § 9B 1) The distress call sent on the frequency 156.8 MHz (VHF channel 16) shall be given in the following form:

- the distress signal MAYDAY, spoken three times;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name of the vessel in distress, spoken three times;
- the call sign or other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial alert has been sent by DSC). (WRC-07)

32.13D 2) The distress message which follows the distress call should be given in the following form:

- the distress signal MAYDAY;
- the name of the vessel in distress;
- the call sign or other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial alert has been sent by DSC);
- the position, given as the latitude and longitude, or if the latitude and longitude are not known or if time is insufficient, in relation to a known geographical location;
- the nature of the distress;
- the kind of assistance required;
- any other useful information. (WRC-07)

32.13E § 9C DSC procedures use a combination of automated functions and manual intervention to generate the appropriate distress call format in the most recent version of Recommendation ITU-R M.541. A distress alert sent by DSC consists of one or more distress alert attempts in which a message format is transmitted identifying the station in distress, giving its last recorded position and, if entered, the nature of the distress. In MF and HF bands, distress alert attempts may be sent as a single-frequency attempt or a multi-frequency attempt on up to six frequencies within one minute. In VHF bands, only single-frequency call attempts are used. The distress alert will repeat automatically at random intervals, a few minutes apart, until an acknowledgement sent by DSC is received. (WRC-07)

B2 – Transmission of a shore-to-ship distress alert relay or a distress call relay (WRC-07)

32.14 § 10 1) A station or a rescue coordination centre which receives a distress alert or call and a distress message shall initiate the transmission of a shore-to-ship distress alert relay addressed, as appropriate, to all ships, to a selected group of ships, or to a specific ship, by satellite and/or terrestrial means. (WRC-07)

32.15 2) The distress alert relay and the distress call relay shall contain the identification of the mobile unit in distress, its position and all other information which might facilitate rescue. (WRC-07)

B3 – Transmission of a distress alert relay or a distress call relay by a station
not itself in distress (WRC-07)

32.16 § 11 A station in the mobile or mobile-satellite service which learns that a mobile unit is in distress (for example, by a radio call or by observation) shall initiate and transmit a distress alert relay or a distress call relay on behalf of the mobile unit in distress once it has ascertained that any of the following circumstances apply: (WRC-07)

32.17 *a)* on receiving a distress alert or call which is not acknowledged by a coast station or another vessel within five minutes (see also Nos. **32.29A** and **32.31**); (WRC-07)

32.18 *b)* on learning that the mobile unit in distress is otherwise unable or incapable of participating in distress communications, if the master or other person responsible for the mobile unit not in distress considers that further help is necessary. (WRC-07)

32.19 § 12 1) The distress relay on behalf of a mobile unit in distress shall be sent in a form appropriate to the circumstances (see Nos. **32.19A** to **32.19D**) using either a distress call relay by radiotelephony (see Nos. **32.19D** and **32.19E**), an individually addressed distress alert relay by DSC (see No. **32.19B**), or a distress priority message through a ship earth station. (WRC-07)

32.19A 2) A station transmitting a distress alert relay or a distress call relay in accordance with Nos. **32.16** to **32.18** shall indicate that it is not itself in distress. (WRC-07)

32.19B 3) A distress alert relay sent by DSC should use the call format, as found in the most recent version of Recommendations ITU-R M.493 and ITU-R M.541, and should preferably be addressed to an individual coast station or rescue coordination centre⁵. (WRC-07)

32.19C 4) However, a ship shall not transmit a distress alert relay to all ships by digital selective calling on the VHF or MF distress frequencies following receipt of a distress alert sent by digital selective calling by the ship in distress. (WRC-07)

32.19D 5) When an aural watch is being maintained on shore and reliable ship-to-shore communications can be established by radiotelephony, a distress call relay is sent by radiotelephony and addressed to the relevant coast station or rescue coordination centre⁶ on the appropriate frequency. (WRC-07)

⁵ **32.19B.1** Vessels making a distress alert relay or a distress call relay should ensure that a suitable coast station or rescue coordination centre is informed of any distress communications previously exchanged. (WRC-07)

⁶ **32.19D.1** Vessels making a distress call relay should ensure that a suitable coast station or rescue coordination centre is informed of any distress communications previously exchanged. (WRC-07)

RR32-6

32.19E 6) The distress call relay sent by radiotelephony should be given in the following form:

- the distress signal MAYDAY RELAY, spoken three times;
- ALL STATIONS or coast station name, as appropriate, spoken three times;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name of the relaying station, spoken three times;
- the call sign or other identification of the relaying station;
- the MMSI (if the initial alert has been sent by DSC) of the relaying station (the vessel not in distress). (WRC-07)

32.19F 7) This call shall be followed by a distress message which shall, as far as possible, repeat the information⁷ contained in the original distress alert or distress message. (WRC-07)

32.19G 8) When no aural watch is being maintained on shore, or there are other difficulties in establishing reliable ship-to-shore communications by radiotelephony, an appropriate coast station or rescue coordination centre may be contacted by sending an individual distress alert relay by DSC, addressed solely to that station and using the appropriate call formats. (WRC-07)

32.19H 9) In the event of continued failure to contact a coast station or rescue coordination centre directly, it may be appropriate to send a distress call relay by radiotelephony addressed to all ships, or to all ships in a certain geographical area. See also No. **32.19C**. (WRC-07)

32.20 C – Receipt and acknowledgement of distress alerts and distress calls (WRC-07)

C1 – Procedure for acknowledgement of receipt of distress alerts or a distress call (WRC-07)

32.21 § 13 1) Acknowledgement of receipt of a distress alert, including a distress alert relay, shall be made in the manner appropriate to the method of transmission of the alert and within the time-scale appropriate to the role of the station in receipt of the alert. Acknowledgement by satellite shall be sent immediately. (WRC-07)

32.21A 2) When acknowledging receipt of a distress alert sent by DSC⁸, the acknowledgement in the terrestrial services shall be made by DSC, radiotelephony or narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy as appropriate to the circumstances, on the associated distress and safety frequency in the same band in which the distress alert was received, taking due account of the directions given in the most recent versions of Recommendations ITU-R M.493 and ITU-R M.541. (WRC-07)

32.21B Acknowledgement by DSC of a distress alert sent by DSC addressed to stations in the maritime mobile service shall be addressed to all stations⁸. (WRC-07)

⁷ **32.19F.1** If the station in distress cannot be identified, then it will be necessary to originate the distress message as well, using, for example, terms such as “Unidentified trawler” refer to the mobile unit in distress. (WRC-07)

⁸ **32.21A.1** In order to ensure that no unnecessary delay occurs before the shore-based authorities become aware of a distress incident, the acknowledgement by DSC to a distress alert sent by DSC shall normally only be made by a coast station or a rescue coordination centre. An acknowledgement by DSC will cancel any further automated repetition of the distress alert using DSC. (WRC-07)

32.22 (SUP - WRC-07)

32.23 § 15 1) When acknowledging by radiotelephony the receipt of a distress alert or a distress call from a ship station or a ship earth station, the acknowledgement should be given in the following form:

- the distress signal MAYDAY;
- the name followed by the call sign, or the MMSI or other identification of the station sending the distress message;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name and call sign or other identification of the station acknowledging receipt;
- the word RECEIVED;
- the distress signal MAYDAY. (WRC-07)

32.24 2) When acknowledging by narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy the receipt of a distress alert from a ship station, the acknowledgement should be given in the following form:

- the distress signal MAYDAY;
- the call sign or other identification of the station sending the distress alert;
- the word DE;
- the call sign or other identification of the station acknowledging receipt of the distress alert;
- the signal RRR;
- the distress signal MAYDAY. (WRC-07)

32.25 (SUP - WRC-07)

C2 – Receipt and acknowledgement by a coast station, a coast earth station or a rescue coordination centre (WRC-07)

32.26 § 17 Coast stations and the appropriate coast earth stations in receipt of distress alerts or distress calls shall ensure that they are routed as soon as possible to a rescue coordination centre. In addition, receipt of a distress alert or a distress call is to be acknowledged as soon as possible by a coast station, or by a rescue coordination centre via a coast station or an appropriate coast earth station. A shore-to-ship distress alert relay or a distress call relay (see Nos. **32.14** and **32.15**) shall also be made when the method of receipt warrants a broadcast alert to shipping or when the circumstances of the distress incident indicate that further help is necessary. (WRC-07)

32.27 § 18 A coast station using DSC to acknowledge a distress alert shall transmit the acknowledgement on the distress calling frequency on which the distress alert was received and should address it to all ships. The acknowledgement shall include the identification of the ship whose distress alert is being acknowledged. (WRC-07)

RR32-8

C3 – Receipt and acknowledgement by a ship station or ship earth station (WRC-07)

32.28 § 19 1) Ship or ship earth stations in receipt of a distress alert or a distress call shall, as soon as possible, inform the master or person responsible for the ship of the contents of the distress alert. (WRC-07)

32.29 2) In areas where reliable communications with one or more coast stations are practicable, ship stations in receipt of a distress alert or a distress call from another vessel should defer acknowledgement for a short interval so that a coast station may acknowledge receipt in the first instance. (WRC-07)

32.29A 3) Ship stations in receipt of a distress call sent by radiotelephony on the frequency 156.8 MHz (VHF channel 16) shall, if the call is not acknowledged by a coast station or another vessel within five minutes, acknowledge receipt to the vessel in distress and use any means available to relay the distress call to an appropriate coast station or coast earth station (see also Nos. **32.16** to **32.19F**). (WRC-07)

32.30 § 20 1) Ship stations operating in areas where reliable communications with a coast station are not practicable which receive a distress alert or call from a ship station which is, beyond doubt, in their vicinity, shall, as soon as possible and if appropriately equipped, acknowledge receipt to the vessel in distress and inform a rescue coordination centre through a coast station or coast earth station (see also Nos. **32.16** to **32.19H**). (WRC-07)

32.31 2) However in order to avoid making unnecessary or confusing transmissions in response, a ship station, which may be at a considerable distance from the incident, receiving an HF distress alert, shall not acknowledge it but shall observe the provisions of Nos. **32.36** to **32.38**, and shall, if the distress alert is not acknowledged by a coast station within five minutes, relay the distress alert, but only to an appropriate coast station or coast earth station (see also Nos. **32.16** to **32.19H**). (WRC-07)

32.32 § 21 A ship station acknowledging receipt of a distress alert sent by DSC should, in accordance with No. **32.29** or No. **32.30**: (WRC-07)

32.33 a) in the first instance, acknowledge receipt of the distress alert by using radiotelephony on the distress and safety traffic frequency in the band used for the alert, taking into account any instructions which may be issued by a responding coast station; (WRC-07)

32.34 b) if acknowledgement by radiotelephony of the distress alert received on the MF or VHF distress alerting frequency is unsuccessful, acknowledge receipt of the distress alert by responding with a digital selective call on the appropriate frequency.

32.34A § 21A However, unless instructed to do so by a coast station or a rescue coordination centre, a ship station may only send an acknowledgement by DSC in the event that:

- a) no acknowledgement by DSC from a coast station has been observed; and
- b) no other communication by radiotelephony or narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy to or from the vessel in distress has been observed; and
- c) at least five minutes have elapsed and the distress alert by DSC has been repeated (see No. **32.21A.1**). (WRC-07)

32.35 § 22 A ship station in receipt of a shore-to-ship distress alert relay or distress call relay (see No. **32.14**) should establish communication as directed and render such assistance as required and appropriate. (WRC-07)

32.36 *D – Preparations for handling of distress traffic*

32.37 § 23 On receipt of a distress alert or a distress call, ship stations and coast stations shall set watch on the radiotelephone distress and safety traffic frequency associated with the distress and safety calling frequency on which the distress alert was received. (WRC-07)

32.38 § 24 Coast stations and ship stations with narrow-band direct-printing equipment shall set watch on the narrow-band direct-printing frequency associated with the distress alert if it indicates that narrow-band direct-printing is to be used for subsequent distress communications. If practicable, they should additionally set watch on the radiotelephone frequency associated with the distress alert frequency. (WRC-07)

Section III – Distress traffic

32.39 *A – General and search and rescue coordinating communications*

32.40 § 25 Distress traffic consists of all messages relating to the immediate assistance required by the ship in distress, including search and rescue communications and on-scene communications. The distress traffic shall as far as possible be on the frequencies contained in Article 31.

32.41 (SUP - WRC-07)

32.42 § 26 For distress traffic by radiotelephony, when establishing communications, calls shall be prefixed by the distress signal MAYDAY.

32.43 § 27 1) Error correction techniques in accordance with relevant ITU-R Recommendations shall be used for distress traffic by direct-printing telegraphy. All messages shall be preceded by at least one carriage return, a line feed signal, a letter shift signal and the distress signal MAYDAY.

32.44 2) Distress communications by direct-printing telegraphy should normally be established by the ship in distress and should be in the broadcast (forward error correction) mode. The ARQ mode may subsequently be used when it is advantageous to do so.

RR32-10

32.45 § 28 1) The rescue coordination centre responsible for controlling a search and rescue operation shall also coordinate the distress traffic relating to the incident or may appoint another station to do so. (WRC-07)

32.46 2) The rescue coordination centre coordinating distress traffic, the unit coordinating search and rescue operations⁹ or the coast station involved may impose silence on stations which interfere with that traffic. This instruction shall be addressed to all stations or to one station only, according to circumstances. In either case, the following shall be used:

32.47 a) in radiotelephony, the signal SEELONCE MAYDAY, pronounced as the French expression “silence, m'aider”;

32.48 b) in narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy normally using forward-error correcting mode, the signal SILENCE MAYDAY. However, the ARQ mode may be used when it is advantageous to do so.

32.49 § 29 Until they receive the message indicating that normal working may be resumed (see No. **32.51**), all stations which are aware of the distress traffic, and which are not taking part in it, and which are not in distress, are forbidden to transmit on the frequencies in which the distress traffic is taking place.

32.50 § 30 A station of the mobile service which, while following distress traffic, is able to continue its normal service, may do so when the distress traffic is well established and on condition that it observes the provisions of No. **32.49** and that it does not interfere with distress traffic.

32.51 § 31 When distress traffic has ceased on frequencies which have been used for distress traffic, the station controlling the search and rescue operation shall initiate a message for transmission on these frequencies indicating that distress traffic has finished. (WRC-07)

32.52 § 32 1) In radiotelephony, the message referred to in No. **32.51** should consist of:

- the distress signal MAYDAY;
- the call “ALL STATIONS”, spoken three times;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name of the station sending that message, spoken three times;
- the call sign or other identification of the station sending the message;
- the time of handing in of the message;
- the MMSI (if the initial alert has been sent by DSC), the name and the call sign of the mobile station which was in distress;
- the words SEELONCE FEENEE pronounced as the French words “silence fini”. (WRC-07)

⁹ **32.46.1** In accordance with the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (1979) this is the on-scene commander (OSC) or the coordinator surface search (CSS).

32.53 2) In direct-printing telegraphy, the message referred to in No. **32.51** consists of:

- the distress signal MAYDAY;
- the call CQ;
- the word DE;
- the call sign or other identification of the station sending the message;
- the time of handing in of the message;
- the name and call sign of the mobile station which was in distress; and
- the words SILENCE FINI.

32.53A *Cancellation of an inadvertent distress alert* (WRC-07)

32.53B § 32A 1) A station transmitting an inadvertent distress alert or call shall cancel the transmission. (WRC-07)

32.53C 2) An inadvertent DSC alert shall be cancelled by DSC, if the DSC equipment is so capable. The cancellation should be in accordance with the most recent version of Recommendation ITU-R M.493. In all cases, cancellations shall also be transmitted by radiotelephone in accordance with **32.53E**. (WRC-07)

32.53D 3) An inadvertent distress call shall be cancelled by radiotelephone in accordance with the procedure in **32.53E**. (WRC-07)

32.53E 4) Inadvertent distress transmissions shall be cancelled orally on the associated distress and safety frequency in the same band on which the distress transmission was sent, using the following procedure:

- the call “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 (if the initial alert has been sent by DSC);
- PLEASE CANCEL MY DISTRESS ALERT OF time in UTC.

Monitor the same band on which the inadvertent distress transmission was sent and respond to any communications concerning that distress transmission as appropriate. (WRC-07)

32.54

B – On-scene communications

32.55 § 33 1) On-scene communications are those between the mobile unit in distress and assisting mobile units, and between the mobile units and the unit coordinating search and rescue operations⁹.

32.56 2) Control of on-scene communications is the responsibility of the unit coordinating search and rescue operations⁹. Simplex communications shall be used so that all on-scene mobile stations may share relevant information concerning the distress incident. If direct-printing telegraphy is used, it shall be in the forward error-correcting mode.

32.57 § 34 1) The preferred frequencies in radiotelephony for on-scene communications are 156.8 MHz and 2 182 kHz. The frequency 2 174.5 kHz may also be used for ship-to-ship on-scene communications using narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy in the forward error correcting mode.

32.58 2) In addition to 156.8 MHz and 2 182 kHz, the frequencies 3 023 kHz, 4 125 kHz, 5 680 kHz, 123.1 MHz and 156.3 MHz may be used for ship-to-aircraft on-scene communications.

32.59 § 35 The selection or designation of on-scene frequencies is the responsibility of the unit coordinating search and rescue operations⁹. Normally, once an on-scene frequency is established, a continuous aural or teleprinter watch is maintained by all participating on-scene mobile units on the selected frequency.

32.60

C – Locating and homing signals

32.61 § 36 1) Locating signals are radio transmissions intended to facilitate the finding of a mobile unit in distress or the location of survivors. These signals include those transmitted by searching units, and those transmitted by the mobile unit in distress, by survival craft, by float-free EPIRBs, by satellite EPIRBs and by search and rescue radar transponders to assist the searching units.

32.62 2) Homing signals are those locating signals which are transmitted by mobile units in distress, or by survival craft, for the purpose of providing searching units with a signal that can be used to determine the bearing to the transmitting stations.

32.63 3) Locating signals may be transmitted in the following frequency bands:

- 117.975-137 MHz;
- 156-174 MHz;
- 406-406.1 MHz; and
- 9 200-9 500 MHz. (WRC-07)

32.64 (SUP – WRC-07)

⁹ **32.55.1, 32.56.1** and **32.59.1** In accordance with the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (1979) this is the on-scene commander (OSC) or the coordinator surface search (CSS).

ARTICLE 33

**Operational procedures for urgency and safety communications in
the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS)**

Section I – General

- 33.1** § 1 1) Urgency and safety communications include: (WRC-07)
- 33.2** a) navigational and meteorological warnings and urgent information;
- 33.3** b) ship-to-ship safety of navigation communications;
- 33.4** c) ship reporting communications;
- 33.5** d) support communications for search and rescue operations;
- 33.6** e) other urgency and safety messages; and
- 33.7** f) communications relating to the navigation, movements and needs of ships and weather observation messages destined for an official meteorological service.
- 33.7A** 2) Urgency communications shall have priority over all other communications, except distress. (WRC-07)
- 33.7B** 3) Safety communications shall have priority over all other communications, except distress and urgency. (WRC-07)

Section II – Urgency communications

- 33.7C** § 1A The following terms apply:
- a) The urgency announcement is a digital selective call using an urgency call format¹, in the bands used for terrestrial radiocommunication, or an urgency message format, in which case it is relayed through space stations.
- b) The urgency call is the initial voice or text procedure.
- c) The urgency message is the subsequent voice or text procedure. (WRC-07)

¹ **33.7C.1** The format of urgency calls and urgency messages should be in accordance with the relevant ITU-R Recommendations. (WRC-07)

RR33-2

33.8 § 2 1) In a terrestrial system, urgency communications consist of an announcement, transmitted using digital selective calling, followed by the urgency call and message transmitted using radiotelephony, narrow-band direct-printing, or data. The announcement of the urgency message shall be made on one or more of the distress and safety calling frequencies specified in Section I of Article **31** using either digital selective calling and the urgency call format, or if not available, radio telephony procedures and the urgency signal. Announcements using digital selective calling should use the technical structure and content set forth in the most recent version of Recommendations ITU-R M.493 and ITU-R M.541. A separate announcement need not be made if the urgency message is to be transmitted through the maritime mobile-satellite service. (WRC-07)

33.8A 2) Ship stations not equipped for digital selective calling procedures may announce an urgency call and message by transmitting the urgency signal by radiotelephony on the frequency 156.8 MHz (channel 16), while taking into account that other stations outside VHF range may not receive the announcement. (WRC-07)

33.8B 3) In the maritime mobile service, urgency communications may be addressed either to all stations or to a particular station. When using digital selective calling techniques, the urgency announcement shall indicate which frequency is to be used to send the subsequent message and, in the case of a message to all stations, shall use the “All Ships” format setting. (WRC-07)

33.8C 4) Urgency announcements from a coast station may also be directed to a group of vessels or to vessels in a defined geographical area. (WRC-07)

33.9 § 3 1) The urgency call and message shall be transmitted on one or more of the distress and safety traffic frequencies specified in Section I of Article **31**. (WRC-07)

33.9A 2) However, in the maritime mobile service, the urgency message shall be transmitted on a working frequency:

- a) in the case of a long message or a medical call; *or*
- b) in areas of heavy traffic when the message is being repeated.

An indication to this effect shall be included in the urgency announcement or call. (WRC-07)

33.9B 3) In the maritime mobile-satellite service, a separate urgency announcement or call does not need to be made before sending the urgency message. However, if available, the appropriate network priority access settings should be used for sending the message. (WRC-07)

33.10 § 4 The urgency signal consists of the words PAN PAN. In radiotelephony each word of the group shall be pronounced as the French word “panne”.

33.11 § 5 1) The urgency call format and the urgency signal indicate that the calling station has a very urgent message to transmit concerning the safety of a mobile unit or a person. (WRC-07)

33.11A 2) Communications concerning medical advice may be preceded by the urgency signal. Mobile stations requiring medical advice may obtain it through any of the land stations shown in the List of Coast Stations and Special Service Stations. (WRC-07)

33.11B 3) Urgency communications to support search and rescue operations need not be preceded by the urgency signal. (WRC-07)

33.12 § 6 1) The urgency call should consist of:

- the urgency signal PAN PAN, spoken three times;
- the name of the called station or “all stations”, spoken three times;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name of the station transmitting the urgency message, spoken three times;
- the call sign or any other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial announcement has been sent by DSC),

followed by the urgency message or followed by the details of the channel to be used for the message in the case where a working channel is to be used.

In radiotelephony, on the selected working frequency, the urgency call and message consists of:

- the urgency signal PAN PAN, spoken three times;
- the name of the called station or “all stations”, spoken three times;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name of the station transmitting the urgency message, spoken three times;
- the call sign or any other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial announcement has been sent by DSC);
- the text of the urgency message. (WRC-07)

33.13 2) In narrow-band direct-printing, the urgency message shall be preceded by the urgency signal (see No. **33.10**) and the identification of the transmitting station.

33.14 § 7 1) The urgency call format or urgency signal shall be sent only on the authority of the person responsible for the ship, aircraft or other vehicle carrying the mobile station or mobile earth station. (WRC-07)

RR33-4

33.15 2) The urgency call format or the urgency signal may be transmitted by a land station or a coast earth station with the approval of the responsible authority.

33.15A § 7A 1) Ship stations in receipt of an urgency announcement or call addressed to all stations shall not acknowledge. (WRC-07)

33.15B 2) Ship stations in receipt of an urgency announcement or call of an urgency message shall monitor the frequency or channel indicated for the message for at least five minutes. If, at the end of the five-minute monitoring period, no urgency message has been received, a coast station should, if possible, be notified of the missing message. Thereafter, normal working may be resumed. (WRC-07)

33.15C 3) Coast and ship stations which are in communication on frequencies other than those used for the transmission of the urgency signal or the subsequent message may continue their normal work without interruption, provided that the urgency message is not addressed to them nor broadcast to all stations. (WRC-07)

33.16 § 8 When an urgency announcement or call and message was transmitted to more than one station and action is no longer required, an urgency cancellation should be sent by the station responsible for its transmission.

The urgency cancellation should consist of:

- the urgency signal PAN PAN, spoken three times;
- “all stations”, spoken three times;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name of the station transmitting the urgency message, spoken three times;
- the call sign or any other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial announcement has been sent by DSC);
- PLEASE CANCEL URGENCY MESSAGE OF time in UTC. (WRC-07)

33.17 § 9 1) Error correction techniques in accordance with relevant ITU-R Recommendations shall be used for urgency messages by direct-printing telegraphy. All messages shall be preceded by at least one carriage return, a line feed signal, a letter shift signal and the urgency signal PAN PAN.

33.18 2) Urgency communications by direct-printing telegraphy should normally be established in the broadcast (forward error correction) mode. The ARQ mode may subsequently be used when it is advantageous to do so.

Section III – Medical transports

33.19 § 10 The term “medical transports”, as defined in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols, refers to any means of transportation by land, water or air, whether military or civilian, permanent or temporary, assigned exclusively to medical transportation and under the control of a competent authority of a party to a conflict or of neutral States and of other States not parties to an armed conflict, when these ships, craft and aircraft assist the wounded, the sick and the shipwrecked.

33.20 § 11 1) For the purpose of announcing and identifying medical transports which are protected under the above-mentioned Conventions, the procedure of Section II of this Article is used. The urgency call shall be followed by the addition of the single word MEDICAL in narrow-band direct-printing and by the addition of the single word MAY-DEE-CAL pronounced as in French “médical”, in radiotelephony. (WRC-07)

33.20A 2) When using digital selective calling techniques, the urgency announcement on the appropriate Digital Selective Calling distress and safety frequencies shall always be addressed to all stations on VHF and to a specified geographical area on MF and HF and shall indicate “Medical transport” in accordance with the most recent version of Recommendations ITU-R M.493 and ITU-R M.541. (WRC-07)

33.20B 3) Medical transports may use one or more of the distress and safety traffic frequencies specified in Section I of Article 31 for the purpose of self-identification and to establish communications. As soon as practicable, communications shall be transferred to an appropriate working frequency. (WRC-07)

33.21 § 12 The use of the signals described in Nos. 33.20 and 33.20A indicates that the message which follows concerns a protected medical transport. The message shall convey the following data: (WRC-07)

33.22 a) call sign or other recognized means of identification of the medical transport;

33.23 b) position of the medical transport;

33.24 c) number and type of vehicles in the medical transport;

33.25 d) intended route;

33.26 e) estimated time en route and of departure and arrival, as appropriate;

33.27 f) any other information, such as flight altitude, radio frequencies guarded, languages used and secondary surveillance radar modes and codes.

RR33-6

33.28 (SUP – WRC-07)

33.29 (SUP – WRC-07)

33.30 § 14 The use of radiocommunications for announcing and identifying medical transports is optional; however, if they are used, the provisions of these Regulations and particularly of this Section and of Articles **30** and **31** shall apply.

Section IV – Safety communications

33.30A § 14A The following terms apply:

- a)* the safety announcement is a digital selective call using a safety call format in the bands used for terrestrial radiocommunication or a safety message format, in which case it is relayed through space stations;
- b)* the safety call is the initial voice or text procedure;
- c)* the safety message is the subsequent voice or text procedure. (WRC-07)

33.31 § 15 1) In a terrestrial system, safety communications consist of a safety announcement, transmitted using digital selective calling, followed by the safety call and message transmitted using radiotelephony, narrow-band direct-printing or data. The announcement of the safety message shall be made on one or more of the distress and safety calling frequencies specified in Section I of Article **31** using either digital selective calling techniques and the safety call format, or radiotelephony procedures and the safety signal. (WRC-07)

33.31A 2) However, in order to avoid unnecessary loading of the distress and safety calling frequencies specified for use with digital selective calling techniques:

- a)* safety messages transmitted by coast stations in accordance with a predefined timetable should not be announced by digital selective calling techniques;
- b)* safety messages which only concern vessels sailing in the vicinity should be announced using radiotelephony procedures. (WRC-07)

33.31B 3) In addition, ship stations not equipped for digital selective calling procedures may announce a safety message by transmitting the safety call by radiotelephony. In such cases the announcement shall be made using the frequency 156.8 MHz (VHF channel 16), while taking into account that other stations outside VHF range may not receive the announcement. (WRC-07)

33.31C 4) In the maritime mobile service, safety messages shall generally be addressed to all stations. In some cases, however, they may be addressed to a particular station. When using digital selective calling techniques, the safety announcement shall indicate which frequency is to be used to send the subsequent message and, in the case of a message to all stations, shall use the “All Ships” format setting. (WRC-07)

33.32 § 16 1) In the maritime mobile service, the safety message shall, where practicable, be transmitted on a working frequency in the same band(s) as those used for the safety announcement or call. A suitable indication to this effect shall be made at the end of the safety call. In the case that no other option is practicable, the safety message may be sent by radiotelephony on the frequency 156.8 MHz (VHF channel 16). (WRC-07)

33.32A 2) In the maritime mobile-satellite service, a separate safety announcement or call does not need to be made before sending the safety message. However, if available, the appropriate network priority access settings should be used for sending the message. (WRC-07)

33.33 § 17 The safety signal consists of the word SECURITE. In radiotelephony, it shall be pronounced as in French.

33.34 § 18 1) The safety call format or the safety signal indicates that the calling station has an important navigational or meteorological warning to transmit. (WRC-07)

33.34A 2) Messages from ship stations containing information concerning the presence of cyclones shall be transmitted, with the least possible delay, to other mobile stations in the vicinity and to the appropriate authorities through a coast station, or through a rescue coordination centre via a coast station or an appropriate coast earth station. These transmissions shall be preceded by the safety announcement or call. (WRC-07)

33.34B 3) Messages from ship stations, containing information on the presence of dangerous ice, dangerous wrecks, or any other imminent danger to marine navigation, shall be transmitted as soon as possible to other ships in the vicinity, and to the appropriate authorities through a coast station, or through a rescue coordination centre via a coast station or an appropriate coast earth station. These transmissions shall be preceded by the safety announcement or call. (WRC-07)

33.35 § 19 1) The complete safety call should consist of:

- the safety signal SECURITE, spoken three times;
- the name of the called station or “all stations”, spoken three times;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name of the station transmitting the safety message, spoken three times;
- the call sign or any other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial announcement has been sent by DSC),

followed by the safety message or followed by the details of the channel to be used for the message in the case where a working channel is to be used.

RR33-8

In radiotelephony, on the selected working frequency, the safety call and message should consist of:

- the safety signal SECURITE, spoken three times;
- the name of the called station or “all stations”, spoken three times;
- the words THIS IS;
- the name of the station transmitting the safety message, spoken three times;
- the call sign or any other identification;
- the MMSI (if the initial alert has been sent by DSC);
- the text of the safety message. (WRC-07)

33.36 2) In narrow-band direct-printing, the safety message shall be preceded by the safety signal (see No. **33.33**), and the identification of the transmitting station.

33.37 § 20 1) Error correction techniques in accordance with relevant ITU-R Recommendations shall be used for safety messages by direct-printing telegraphy. All messages shall be preceded by at least one carriage return, a line feed signal, a letter shift signal and the safety signal SECURITE.

33.38 2) Safety communications by direct-printing telegraphy should normally be established in the broadcast (forward error correction) mode. The ARQ mode may subsequently be used when it is advantageous to do so.

33.38A § 20A 1) Ship stations in receipt of a safety announcement using digital selective calling techniques and the “All Ships” format setting, or otherwise addressed to all stations, shall not acknowledge. (WRC-07)

33.38B 2) Ship stations in receipt of a safety announcement or safety call and message shall monitor the frequency or channel indicated for the message and shall listen until they are satisfied that the message is of no concern to them. They shall not make any transmission likely to interfere with the message. (WRC-07)

Section V – Transmission of maritime safety information²

33.39 *A – General*

33.39A (SUP – WRC-07)

33.39B (SUP – WRC-07)

² **33.V.1** Maritime safety information includes navigation and meteorological warnings, meteorological forecasts and other urgent messages pertaining to safety transmitted from coast stations or coast earth stations. (WRC-07)

33.40 (SUP – WRC-07)

33.41 § 22 The mode and format of the transmissions mentioned in Nos. **33.43**, **33.45**, **33.46** and **33.48** shall be in accordance with the relevant ITU-R Recommendations.

33.42 *B – International NAVTEX system*

33.43 § 23 Maritime safety information shall be transmitted by means of narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy with forward error correction using the frequency 518 kHz in accordance with the international NAVTEX system (see Appendix 15).

33.44 *C – 490 kHz and 4 209.5 kHz*

33.45 § 24 1) The frequency 490 kHz may be used for the transmission of maritime safety information by means of narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy with forward error correction (see Appendix 15). (WRC-03)

33.46 2) The frequency 4 209.5 kHz is used exclusively for NAVTEX-type transmission by means of narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy with forward error correction.

33.47 *D – High seas maritime safety information*

33.48 § 25 Maritime safety information is transmitted by means of narrow-band direct-printing telegraphy with forward error correction using the frequencies 4 210 kHz, 6 314 kHz, 8 416.5 kHz, 12 579 kHz, 16 806.5 kHz, 19 680.5 kHz, 22 376 kHz and 26 100.5 kHz.

33.49 *E – Maritime safety information via satellite*

33.50 § 26 Maritime safety information may be transmitted via satellite in the maritime mobile-satellite service using the band 1 530-1 545 MHz (see Appendix 15).

Section VI – Intership navigation safety communications

33.51 § 27 1) Intership navigation safety communications are those VHF radio-telephone communications conducted between ships for the purpose of contributing to the safe movement of ships.

33.52 2) The frequency 156.650 MHz is used for intership navigation safety communications (see also Appendix 15 and note *k*) in Appendix 18).

Section VII – Use of other frequencies for safety (WRC-07)

33.53 § 28 Radiocommunications for safety purposes concerning ship reporting communications, communications relating to the navigation, movements and needs of ships and weather observation messages may be conducted on any appropriate communications frequency, including those used for public correspondence. In terrestrial systems, the bands 415-535 kHz (see Article **52**), 1 606.5-4 000 kHz (see Article **52**), 4 000-27 500 kHz (see Appendix **17**), and 156-174 MHz (see Appendix **18**) are used for this function. In the maritime mobile-satellite service, frequencies in the bands 1 530-1 544 MHz and 1 626.5-1 645.5 MHz are used for this function as well as for distress alerting purposes (see No. **32.2**). (WRC-07)

33.54 (SUP – WRC-07)

33.55 (SUP – WRC-07)

ARTICLE 34

Alerting signals in the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS)**Section I – Emergency position-indicating radiobeacon (EPIRB) and satellite EPIRB signals**

34.1 § 1 The emergency position-indicating radiobeacon signal in the band 406-406.1 MHz shall be in accordance with Recommendation ITU-R M.633-3. (WRC-07)

Section II – Digital selective calling

34.2 § 2 The characteristics of the “distress call” (see No. **32.9**) in the digital selective calling system shall be in accordance with relevant ITU-R Recommendations (see Resolution **27 (Rev.WRC-03)***).

* *Note by the Secretariat:* This Resolution was revised by WRC-07.