

MARINE BAND: RADIO

Use of a Marine Band radio: Careful discipline is required. “Handles,” “10 codes,” CB jargon, and idle chitchat have no place in marine radiotelephone communication. The Federal Communications Commission monitors transmissions and will issue citations for repeated violations of the rules. A marine radiotelephone is not a plaything. It can—and has—saved many lives. Each vessel is required by law to monitor the emergency and calling channel unless actively speaking on another channel designated for the type of transmission being sent. Scouts are most likely to encounter VHF radios with channels 06 to

06	Safety messages, ship to ship
09	Primary hail (call), and monitor (listen)
13	Hail commercial vessels and drawbridge tenders on low power
16.....	Emergency (Mayday) hail; hail Coast Guard
22	Coast Guard working channel
24, 25, 26, 27, 28	Hail marine operator; phone calls
68, 69, 71, 72, 78	Pleasure boat working channels

VHF Marine Radio Channels for pleasure boaters

88. Just a few channels are for pleasure boaters:

Use Channel 16 for calling, distress, urgency, or safety only. Coast stations and commercial vessels no longer monitor this channel but pleasure yachts do, so you should ask for the coast guard to be notified in cases of emergency. Marine radiotelephone conversations are terse, efficient, and to the point. Each transmission may last no more than five minutes. Each station spends as little time as possible on channel 16, clearing it for emergency and other use. The phonetic alphabet is used for radiotelephone call signs. For example, WLB 4321 would be “Whiskey Lima Bravo 4321”. For numbers 0 and 9 use “zero” (never naught nor oh) and “niner” (instead of nine). “Sierra, Charlie, Oscar, Uniform, Tango” would be how to spell “Scout”.

Prowords: A number of procedure words, or “prowords,” have become common usage. The most misused prowords are “over” and “out.” “Over” means, “It’s your turn to talk.” “Out” means, “I’ve finished this transmission.” If you say “Over and out,” you’re saying, “It’s your turn to talk, but I’m not listening.” There are other prowords, but the following are the most common:

Over. It is your turn to talk.
Out. I have finished talking and no reply is expected.
Roger. I understand.
Wilco. I will comply.
Say again. Please repeat your last transmission.
I spell. I am spelling in phonetic words.

Common Prowords

How to make a call: Listen before you speak. There is a prescribed format used to begin a call on a marine radiotelephone. All calls are made on channel 16 when VHF is used, 2182 kHz for SSB. Once contact is established, both stations shift to a working frequency to transact their business. Here's an example of the procedure where radio callsign KL5502 on "Invincible" is calling "Scout" (callsign KD1996 is onboard):

- Check to be sure that the calling and desired working channels are free of traffic.
- Place the call, being sure to identify who you are calling and who is making the call:
 - **"Scout, Scout, Scout. This is Invincible, Kilo Mike 5502. Over."**
- If not immediately answered, the call may be repeated. If there is no answer within 30 seconds, two minutes must elapse before calling again.
- The vessel being called answers:
 - **"Invincible, this is Scout, Kilo Delta 1996. Over."**
- The two stations agree on the working channel:
 - **"Scout, Invincible; shift and answer six eight."**
 - **"Six eight; wilco."**
- Both stations now shift to channel 68.
- The called station speaks next:
 - **"Invincible. Scout, Kilo Delta 1996. Over."**
- This identifies the stations now on channel 68. The vessel that originated the call now identifies itself and the conversation proceeds:
 - **"Scout. Invincible, Kilo Mike 5502." (The message now follows.)**
- Each vessel's radio operator takes turn speaking. Each message ends with "over" to let the other party know that a reply is desired.
- When the business has been concluded, both stations sign off and shift back to channel 16:
 - **"Scout, Kilo Delta 1996, out."**
 - **"Invincible, Kilo Mike 5502, out."**

Emergency Messages (near the coast): The principal purpose of the marine radiotelephone is to handle emergencies. Three types of emergency messages are used and all are voice transmissions on channel 16 or on 2182 kHz (Morse on 500 kHz). :

- **Mayday:** Distress—Loss of life, serious illness or injury, or loss of the vessel is possible.
- **Pan Pan** (pronounced pahh): Urgent—Safety of the vessel or person is in jeopardy. Loss of life or property is not likely, but help is needed.
- **Security** (pronounced say-curitay): Safety message—Used to report hazard to navigation, buoy off station, extreme weather, etc.

If your vessel is in distress, place a Mayday or Pan Pan call. Remember, these messages must be used only in the event of a real emergency. If a situation is spotted, boaters are usually advised to report it to the Coast Guard and let them evaluate the situation and issue the Security message. Their taller antenna will give better coverage. As soon as a Mayday, Pan Pan, or Security message is heard, all other traffic on channel 16 must stop. If someone tries to transmit on any other subject, the command "Seelonce" (silence) may be given. Normally the entire Mayday or Pan Pan situation is handled on channel 16. If another channel is to be used, this will be ordered by the search and rescue authority, usually the Coast Guard. Since Security messages do not involve a threat to life or property, all traffic beyond the initial call shifts to a working channel.

1. Make sure your radiotelephone is on.
2. Select either VHF channel 16 (156.8 MHz) or 2182 kHz.
3. Press microphone button and *SPEAK SLOWLY-CLEARLY-CALMLY*. Say:
 - "MAYDAY-MAYDAY-MAYDAY."
 - "THIS IS ____ ____ ____ [*Your call sign/boat name repeated three times*]"
 - "MAYDAY ____ [*Your boat name*]"
 - *Describe where you are (What navigational aids or landmarks are near?).*
 - *State the nature of your distress.*
 - *Give number of persons aboard and conditions of any injured.*
 - *Estimate present seaworthiness of your boat.*
 - *Briefly describe your boat: _ ____ feet: _____; _____ hull;*
 - *Type Color*
 - *_____ trim; _ _____ masts; _____*
 - *Color Number, sail number, and anything else you think will help rescuers find you*
 - "I WILL BE LISTENING ON CHANNEL 16/2182."
4. End message by saying:
 - THIS IS_ ____ OVER." [*Your boat name and call sign*]
5. Release microphone button and listen; someone should answer.

Example of Emergency Message

Emergency Messages (far from the coast): Although beyond what a scout might encounter or be able to use, there is an internationally recognized distress and radio communication safety system for ships known as GMDSS (Global Maritime Distress and Safety System). It is complex, automated and requires special equipment, mandatory training and licensing. It is not compulsory for pleasure yachts. The system includes special equipment using Digital Selective Calling (DSC), e.g. using Ch 70 on VHF, which is now used by coast stations and commercial vessels for the watch of the distress, safety and calling. Watch by them on channels (Ch 16 VHF and 2182 kHz MF) has been discontinued.