

Former *Annual New Zealand Notice to Mariners, No. 8*, published 1 July 2025 is cancelled. This is a repetition of the former notice.

Authority: New Zealand Defence Force (Headquarters Joint Force New Zealand)

### Warning Signals

1. Mariners are warned that considerable hazard to life may result from the disregard of the following signals which denote the presence of submarines:
  - (a) Visual signals. Warships fly the International Code Group "NE2" to denote that submarines which may be submerged, are in the vicinity. Vessels are cautioned to steer so as to give a wide berth to any vessel flying this signal. If from any cause it is necessary to approach her, a good look-out must be kept for submarines whose presence may be indicated only by their periscopes or snort masts showing above the water.
  - (b) Pyrotechnics and smoke candles. The following signals are used by submerged submarines:

Signal	Signification
White smoke candle (with flame)..... Yellow smoke candles Yellow and green pyro flares.	Indicates position in response to request from ship or aircraft, or as required.
Red pyro flares..... (may be accompanied by smoke candles repeated as often as possible).	Keep clear I am carrying out emergency surfacing procedure. Do not stop propellers. Clear the immediate area, but stand by to render assistance.

Note: If the red pyro flare signal is sighted and the submarine does not surface within 5 minutes, it should be assumed that the submarine is in distress and has sunk. An immediate attempt should be made to fix the position in which the signal was sighted, after which action in accordance with paragraphs 13 – 19 below should be taken.

2. It must not be inferred from the above that submarines exercise only when in company with escorting vessels. Submarines operate in areas other than promulgated Submarine Exercise Areas.
3. The note *Submarine Exercise Area* on certain charts should not be read to mean that submarines do not exercise outside such areas. Under normal circumstances the majority of submarine exercise activity will be limited to promulgated Military Operating Areas (MOA). However this does not preclude exercises or operations in other areas. In such cases, participating units will make or display appropriate warning signals. Under certain circumstances warnings that submarines are exercising in specified areas may be broadcast by a coast radio station or promulgated in printed navigational warnings.

For more information regarding Submarine Exercise Areas in New Zealand, see *Annual New Zealand Notice to Mariners, No. 5*.

### Navigation Lights

4. Submarines have their masthead and side lights placed well forward and very low over the water in proportion to the length and tonnage of these vessels. In particular:
  - (a) Some submarines can show a forward masthead light only in calm confined waters;
  - (b) In other submarines the forward masthead light may be lower than the sidelights;
  - (c) The main masthead light may be well forward of the mid-point of the submarine's length;
  - (d) Some submarines, despite their length, may show only one masthead light.
5. Stern lights are placed very low indeed, and may at times be partially obscured by spray and wash. In some cases the stern lights will be well forward of the after part of the submarine, and thus will not give a true indication of the submarine's length. They are invariably lower than the side lights.
6. The after light of submarines at anchor is mounted on the upper rudder which is some distance astern of the hull's surface waterline. Care must be taken to avoid confusion with two separate vessels of less than 50 metres in length.
7. The overall arrangement of submarine lights is therefore unusual and may well give the impression of markedly smaller and shorter vessels than what they are. Their vulnerability to collision when proceeding on the surface dictates particular caution when approaching them. Nearly all submarines are fitted with an amber quick-flashing light situated above or abaft the main steaming light. This additional light is for use as an aid to identification in narrow waters and areas of dense traffic. Australian submarines will normally burn this identification light under the above conditions, and when entering or leaving harbour at night.

8. Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Collins class submarines exhibit a very quick flashing yellow identification light (120 flashes per minute) VQ.Y. This identification light should not be confused with an air cushion vessel operating in a non-displacement mode which displays the same light.

### Sunken Submarine

9. A bottomed submarine which is unable to surface will try to indicate her position by firing candles which give off yellow or white smoke. This will be done either on the approach of surface vessels or at regular intervals. As far as possible yellow candles will be used by day.

Note: It should be remembered that it may be impossible for a submarine to fire her smoke candles. Correspondingly a partially flooded submarine may have only a certain number of her smoke candles available, and searching ships should therefore not expect many to appear.

10. Since oil slicks or debris may be the only indication of the presence or whereabouts of the sunken submarine, it is vitally important that surface ships refrain from discharging anything which might appear to have come from a submarine while they are in the submarine probability area. Searching ships and aircraft can waste many valuable hours investigating these false contacts.
11. Some submarine pyrotechnics can be fitted with message carriers. If a message has been attached, the pyrotechnic will be fitted with a dye marker, which gives off a yellowish-green dye on the surface. Such a pyrotechnic should be recovered as soon as it has finished burning.
12. RAN Collins class submarines are fitted with the purpose Submarine Launched EPIRB (SERB). A description of the SERB is given at paragraph 20 below.
13. The sighting of any beacon answering the attached description should at once be reported by the quickest available means to the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand, the Royal New Zealand Navy or New Zealand Police. However, if vessels are unable to establish communications without leaving the vicinity of the submarine, it should be borne in mind that the primary consideration should be for vessels to remain standing by to rescue survivors, and not leave the scene of the accident. Every effort should be made to include in the report the serial number of the beacon; this number is affixed on top of the SERB (see paragraph 20 below).
14. At any time after a submarine accident, survivors may start attempting to escape. Current policy dictates that survivors will wait before escaping until:
- Rescue vessels are known to be standing by; or
  - Conditions inside the submarine deteriorate to such an extent that an attempt to escape must be made.
- In this situation, personnel will be wearing a red/orange escape suit enclosed in a red/orange single person life raft or, if escape was conducted immediately (Rush Escape), survivors will be wearing orange coloured Submarine Escape Jerkins (SEJ). SEJs provide no thermal insulation qualities. Survivors wearing SEJs would present the same visual aspect as personnel wearing a large life jacket.
15. It should be noted that, in certain circumstances, the situation described in paragraph 14(b) above may not arise through lack of air supply until several days after the accident. However, if the submarine is badly damaged, survivors may have to make an escape attempt immediately. Any ship finding a SERB should therefore not leave the position, but stand by well clear ready to pick up survivors. The latter will ascend nearly vertically, and it is plainly important that plenty of sea room is given to enable them to do so in safety. On arrival on the surface, they may be exhausted or ill. Therefore, if circumstances are favourable, the presence of a boat already lowered is very desirable. Some survivors may require a recompression chamber, and it will therefore be the aim of the naval authorities to get such a chamber to the scene as soon as possible.
16. In order that those trapped in the submarine will be made aware that help is at hand, Navy vessels drop small charges into the sea. These can be heard from inside the submarine. There is no objection to the use of small charges for this purpose; but it is vital that they are not dropped too close. This is because crew in the process of making ascents are particularly vulnerable to underwater explosions, and may easily receive fatal injuries. A distance of a quarter of a mile is considered to be safe. If no small charges are available, the running of an echo sounder or the banging of the outer skin of the ship's hull with a hammer from a position below the waterline is likely to be heard in the submarine. Such banging and/or sounding should therefore be carried out at frequent intervals.
17. Submarines may at any time release pyrotechnic floats, which on reaching the surface burn with flame and/or smoke thus, serving to mark the position of the wreck. They are likely to acknowledge sound signals by this means.
18. To sum up, the aims of a submarine rescue operation are:
- To fix the exact position of the submarine;
  - To get a ship standing by to pick up survivors if practicable with boats already lowered;
  - To get medical assistance to survivors picked up;

- (d) To get a diver's decompression chamber to the scene in case this is required by those seriously ill after being exposed to great pressure;
- (e) To inform the trapped crew that help is at hand; and
- (f) To notify appropriate authorities.
19. There is a large Navy organisation designed to fulfil these aims which is always kept at instant readiness for action. It is clear, however, that any ship may at any time find evidence of a submarine disaster, and if she takes prompt and correct action, as described above, she may be in a position to play a vital part.

#### Submarine Emergency Radio Beacon (SERB)

20. This beacon is made of aluminium, coloured orange and is cylindrical in shape, with two whip aerials. The beacon is fitted with an automatic transmitting unit (battery life of 48 hours) operating on the following frequencies:
- 406.025 MHz COSPAS-SARSAT/EPIRB;
  - 243 MHz Military Air Guard; and
  - 121.5 MHz Civil Air Guard.

SERBs carried in RAN Collins class submarines can be released from inside the submarine from each Escape Compartment via a Submerged Signal Ejector, and are not tethered to the submarine in any way. Additionally, if pre-programmed by the crew of the disabled submarine, the EPIRB signal can carry a coded message indicating the following information:

- (a) Local time of release;
- (b) Number of survivors;
- (c) Time till escape must start in hours;
- (d) Depth (if less than 180 metres) or an indication that rescue is required;
- (e) Internal pressure;
- (f) Medical status of survivors;
- (g) Presence of hostile forces; and
- (h) Estimated Lat/Long.

#### Submarine Launched Expendable Communications Buoy (ECB)

21. This buoy is used for tactical communications between submarines and warships/aircraft. It can, however, be fired in an emergency default mode. In this case it will transmit a SABRE tone on 243 MHz Military Air Guard.
22. General descriptions of Submarine Emergency Radio Beacons (SERB), Expendable Communications Buoys (ECB), smoke candles fired from submarines, sonobuoys, and aircraft floats, smoke and flame markers are as follows:
- (a) White Smoke Candles. These are fired from submarines to indicate their position. They burn for up to 15 minutes emitting white smoke and flame, and thus can be seen day or night; they can easily be confused with the smoke and flame of aircraft marine markers and floats.
- (b) Yellow Smoke Candles. These are fired from submarines to indicate their position. They burn for about five minutes emitting yellow smoke. They can be seen more easily than the white smoke candles in rough weather, but cannot be seen at night.
- (c) Sonobuoys. These are dropped from aircraft to detect submarines and may be encountered anywhere at sea. Other countries have similar sonobuoys but their colour and dimensions are not known.
- (d) The Expendable Communications Buoy (ECB) provides a one way line-of-sight communication between the disabled submarine and surface units. The ECB is a programmable tactical buoy which acts as an alert beacon for submarines in distress. When used in the Alert mode, the buoy transmits a tone on 243 MHz.

The ECB is pre-programmed for distress and does not require programming prior to launch. When the ECB arrives at the surface, it deploys an aerial and flotation collar and commences to transmit.

The following statistics are relevant:

Transmitting Cycle	Range	Battery Life
3 Minutes Transmit – 1 Minute	70 NM – Aircraft 18 NM – Shore 15 NM – Ship	4 Hours +

23. The above may frequently be encountered in areas where warships and aircraft exercise, whether or not submarines are present, and should not be confused with submarine emergency buoys and beacons. In case of doubt, the object should be approached to confirm visually whether or not it is a submarine emergency buoy or beacon before reporting it.
24. The following is a list of candle smoke and markers currently used by New Zealand and Australia:
- (a) Submarine Bubble Decoy Mk N2.
  - (b) Schermuly Icarus Band Radar flare.
  - (c) Marker Man Overboard, Smoke and Light Mk N3 and Series 2.
  - (d) Marker Location Marine Mk 25.
  - (e) Float Signal Submerged Mk N4.
  - (f) Float Signal Submerged (Grenade) Mk N3.
  - (g) Candle Smoke Yellow Mk N7.
  - (h) Candle Smoke White Mk N6.
  - (i) Candle Smoke White Mk 4N.
  - (j) Submarine Launched Flare D4A.
- Department of Defence (Navy). (AH 99/50)
25. It should be noted that the Royal Australian Navy no longer uses the frequency 243 MHz and no longer carries ECB on its submarines.

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