



Safety Thursday Series issue 2

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EPIRBs and PLBs

EPIRBs and PLBs are locator beacon devices that, when activated in an emergency situation, will report your position to authorities to help increase the chances of a successful rescue of you and your crew. There is an important change to the Mac Safety Regulations (MSRs) this year in that we are now requiring at least one EPIRB or PLB per boat. The MSR reads:

57. EPIRBs – Any EPIRB that is required to be carried per these MSR shall be a 406 MHz EPIRB that is either:

- 1. connected to a continuously functioning external GPS or,*
- 2. fitted with an internal GPS.*

Further, the EPIRB shall be properly registered with the appropriate authority and should be tested in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions when first commissioned and then at least annually. A Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), meeting the above criteria, shall satisfy the EPIRB requirement above.

For the Chicago Yacht Club Race to Mackinac - EPIRBs are required to be carried by all boats.

EPIRBs are designed to be mounted to your boat and PLBs are worn by a person. For our race you can use either an EPIRB or PLB (or both) to satisfy the requirement. There are many differences between EPIRBs and PLBs, but the fundamental ones come down to size, battery life, durability and inherent buoyancy. EPIRBs are registered to the boat, while PLBs are registered to an individual. A good rundown of emergency beacons is available at

<http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov/emercns.html>

Take the time to read it and to understand how these devices can be used to signal for help in a Mayday situation.

No matter which device you choose, it is imperative that you register it with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:

<http://beaconregistration.noaa.gov/>



Without registration, the beacon is essentially useless. Registration allows the Search and Rescue (SAR) authorities to identify whose beacon is going off, helping them deploy appropriate resources and avoid false alarms by contacting emergency contacts.

Your registration is valid for two years, however; it is important that you update it whenever there is a change in your information. If you are using a PLB, we strongly recommend that you list your boat's information when prompted to complete the "Additional Data" section during the registration process. Any identifying information would be helpful – boat name, sail number, color of hull and sails, and anything else SAR authorities can use to help identify your boat.

As always, if you have any questions, please contact our Race Coordinator at racecoordinator@chicagoyachtclub.org

Note: The purpose of this article is to highlight some of the Mac Safety Regulations and how your crew can race the Mac as safely as possible. As always, ultimate responsibility for the safety of the crew and the decision whether to race or to stop racing is that of the skipper (RRS4, MSR2). This email is meant as a courtesy only and you should always refer to the Race Documents section of the website for the Notice of Race, Sailing Instructions and Mac Safety Regulations, which govern the race.