

# 9. Distress

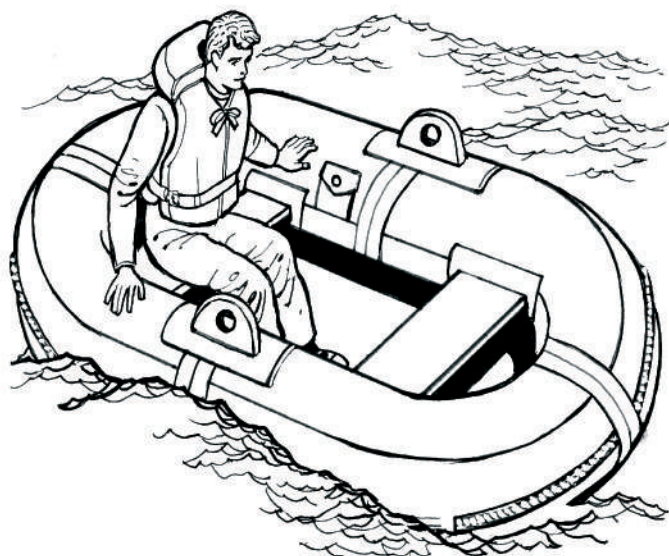
In this unit:

- Actions in an emergency
- Information and instructions for emergencies
- The International Code of Signals
- SMCPs: May-day and Pan-pan exchanges

## Casting off

Survival in a life raft

**A** Read the text and answer the questions.



You are alone on a boat 150 NM from land. There is an accident and your boat begins to sink. You send an all stations May-day message. There is no response. All you can do now is load the life raft.

What should you take? Should you plan for long-term survival or early rescue?

**B** Choose from the lists of items below. Each item 'costs' points as shown. You have no more than 15 points. Use the glossary on page 91 to check any words you don't know. Explain your choices.

Personal	Equipment	Electronic devices
drinking water 1	life jacket 1	mobile phone 4
extra food 4	medical kit 3	distress radio beacon (EPIRB) 1
extra clothing 3	emergency food 2	VHF radio 4
fishing line 1	flares 3	GPS 4
bailer 1	fire extinguisher 3	batteries 4
sewing kit 1	whistle 1	laptop computer 4
matches 1	chart 1	
mirror 1	compass 1	
passport 1	sea anchor 3	
torch 1	outboard engine 3	
knife 1	can of petrol 3	

## SMCPs

Distress and urgency

**A** Read these two definitions, then study situations 1-3 and decide if each is a May-day or a Pan-pan situation.

**May day:** Great danger, help me!

**Pan-pan:** I've got a problem, stand by.

**1** A family is on a small yacht with a sail and an engine. The propeller is fouled and the engine fails.

**2** A crew member falls overboard. He is wearing a life jacket but you can't see where he is. The water is very cold.

**3** A coastguard sends a ship a warning of icebergs but later loses contact. The ship is missing. The coastguard needs help to find her.

**B** Listen to a May-day call and complete this record.

- 1 Call sign of vessel in distress: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Position of vessel in distress: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Nature of the emergency: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Type of assistance required: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Action being taken by crew: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Call sign of coastguard: \_\_\_\_\_

**C** Read the exchange with a partner.

**Vessel:** May-day, May-day, May-day. This is Alpha Quebec Papa three nine. Alpha Quebec Papa three nine. Alpha Quebec Papa three nine. May-day. Our position is: five-five degrees north, zero-four degrees east. Our vessel is sinking. We require immediate rescue. We have nine persons on board. We are taking a lifeboat. Over.

**Coastguard:** May-day Alpha Quebec Papa three nine. This is Hotel Lima Charlie one zero five. Received your May-day. Over.

**C** Discuss how, in a life raft, you can *keep warm, keep clean, keep dry, get drinking water and get food.*

**D** Put the sections of this Pan-Pan call into the correct order. Section number 1 is numbered for you.

a We have an injured man on board.

b Pan-pan, Pan-pan, Pan-pan. 1

c My position is: three-seven degrees north, one-four degrees west. \_\_\_\_

d This is MV Suraya, MV Suraya, MV Suraya. \_\_\_\_

e This is MV Suraya listening on channel one six. Over. \_\_\_\_

f We are proceeding to Lisbon and require medical assistance ashore. \_\_\_\_

**E** Listen and check your answers.

**F** Practise distress calls with a partner.

**1 Student A:** Use this information and add your own ideas to make a call.

*You are master of a cruise ship. Pirates in a small boat are attacking your cruise ship.*

**Student B:** Respond.

**2 Student B:** Use this information and add your own ideas to make a call.

*You are a coastguard. There is a report of an overturned vessel with two people in the water. Request help from vessels in the area.*

**Student A:** Respond

**B** Describe what is happening in this picture. Then read the account below.



Cargo ship Green Goblin is carrying a dangerous cargo. As she approaches port the cargo explodes. The crew **activate** emergency procedures and **deploy** fire fighting equipment but they cannot **extinguish** the fire. The captain **alerts** the coastguard. The crew **muster** on deck and the first officer **holds a roll call**. They prepare to **abandon** ship. Emergency teams arrive and try to **stabilize** the situation. A helicopter **air lifts** the crew. The fire **injures** two crew but everyone **survives**.

**C** Find words in the account that match the definitions 1-10.

- 1 Hurt someone: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Put out a fire: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Call out names: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Tell others of an emergency: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Meet at an arranged place: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Rescue by helicopter: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Put into action: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Use: \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Does not die: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Stop things from getting worse: \_\_\_\_\_

**D** Complete these sentences with verbs from the account. All the verbs are regular. Put them all into the Simple Past tense. The first is done for you.

- 1 Fuel on the tanker *exploded*.
- 2 The captain \_\_\_\_\_ the emergency services.
- 3 The crew \_\_\_\_\_ fire fighting equipment.
- 4 One man fell into the sea but he \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 All hands \_\_\_\_\_ on deck for a roll call.
- 6 The crew \_\_\_\_\_ ship.
- 7 Air sea rescue \_\_\_\_\_ the crew to safety.
- 8 No one died but the accident \_\_\_\_\_ two hands.

## Vocabulary

### Maritime emergencies

**A** Have you ever been in any of these emergency situations? Describe the experience to other students.

- A collision (kə'liʒən)
- An allision (ə'liʒən)
- A man overboard
- A medical emergency
- A fire
- An explosion (ɪk'spləʊʒən)

## Pronunciation

### Consonant groups

A lot of English words contain groups of two or more consonants. Here are some examples:

*stabilize* ('steɪbəlaɪz), *activate* (æk'teɪveɪt) and *establish* (ɪ'stæblɪʃ).

🔊 Listen to the three examples and repeat.

To pronounce difficult consonant groups, it helps to split words into parts; for example: ac-ti-vate. Stress the first part and say the word slowly: **ac**-ti-vate then gradually faster and faster until you can run the parts into each other.

Here are some common consonant groups:

pl - st - bl - br - ts - nd - sc

🔊 Listen to them and repeat.

The consonant groups above are in the following words. Practise speaking them aloud with a partner.

🔊 Listen to them and repeat.

deploy, explode, explosion,  
destroy, distress, mast, test, muster,  
able, stable, diable, possible, visible,  
bread, broken, bridge,  
shots, floats, tests,  
manned, abandon, hands, under, land  
rescue, escape, screw

🔊 Listen to these sentences and repeat.

1 (st) In distress establish a muster station fast at the destroyed mast.

2 (nd) The MV Andrew is under-manned and abandoned by the hands on land.

3 (bl) She is visible but in trouble; diabled and unstable and unable to secure her cable.

## Structures

### Instructions for emergency situations



**A** Study the wording of this notice.

Another way to say it is: *If there is a fire, break the glass.*

You can reverse the sentence:

*Break the glass if there is a fire.*

You can also say: *In the event of fire break the glass.*

Which tense is used in the sentences above?

**B** Match the halves of the sentences. The first is done for you.

- |                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 If there is a fire          | a the event of a fire.  |
| 2 In case of                  | b if you abandon ship.  |
| 3 The medical kit is          | c alert the coastguard. |
| 4 In the event of a collision | d wear it.              |
| 5 Activate your EPIRB         | e close all the doors.  |
| 6 Close all the doors in      | f in case of emergency. |
| 7 If you have a life jacket,  | g emergency, push here. |

**C** Note two different meanings of *fire*.

1 To fire at/on; to shoot. *The pirates fired shots at the ship.*

2 To be on fire; to be burning. *The ship is on fire.*  
To *set fire* to something means to start a fire. *The pirates set fire to the tanker.*

**Complete this message.**

We are under attack. Armed men are \_\_\_\_\_ rockets at us. They have \_\_\_\_\_ to our vessel. I repeat: our vessel is \_\_\_\_\_ fire.

**D** Complete the instructions that go with the emergency signs. The first is done for you.



1. If there is a \_\_\_\_\_  
If there is a *fire activate the alarm*.



2. In the event \_\_\_\_\_ deploy \_\_\_\_\_.



3. \_\_\_\_\_ in an emergency.



4. Throw \_\_\_\_\_ in the event  
\_\_\_\_\_ overboard.



5. Deploy \_\_\_\_\_ if you \_\_\_\_\_ ship.



6. Wear \_\_\_\_\_ in case \_\_\_\_\_  
overboard.



7. Open the \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_.

## Listening

### Emergency procedures

**A** What information do you find on a station bill? Add to this list.

- The meaning of different alarms
- Emergency duties
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**B** Look at this part of a station bill for an offshore oil rig. Make some guesses about the missing words 1-15.

### Offshore oil installation STATION BILL

	Alarm	Action
General Alarm	Intermittent	Stop all work Proceed to <b>1</b> _____ Roll call taken by: <b>2</b> _____
Prepare to abandon platform	<b>3</b> _____ Order from OIM: 'Prepare to abandon platform'	Alert all personnel Put on <b>4</b> _____ and <b>5</b> _____ Location of extra life jackets: <b>6</b> _____ Proceed to: <b>7</b> _____
Fire		If you see a fire: <b>8</b> _____ Telephone: <b>9</b> _____ Report: <b>10</b> _____ and <b>11</b> _____ of fire
Man overboard		Throw a lifebuoy Shout 'man overboard' Do not <b>12</b> _____ <b>13</b> _____ at the man and keep him in sight

**C** 🎧 Listen to the Offshore Installation Manager (OIM) talk about emergency procedures and complete the station bill. Use no more than three words for each gap.



## Reading

### Attacks by pirates: questions and answers

**A** The men in the photograph on the right have guns. Imagine that they approach your ship. Discuss with another student possible answers to these questions.

- 1 What should we do if they fire at the ship?
- 2 What should we do if they get on board?
- 3 What should I do to survive as a prisoner?
- 4 What do pirates want?
- 5 Should I try to escape or fight back?

**B** Read the paragraphs a-e. They are answers to the questions 1-5 (above). Match each paragraph to a question. Do you agree with the answers?

**a** They want money and their leaders will talk to the ship's owners about a ransom. They don't want to injure or kill any of their hostages and they may muster the crew on deck to show the world's media that everyone is alive. \_\_\_\_\_

**b** Time will pass slowly and there will be many people on board. Smile and try to communicate with the pirates. Have a routine: eat, read, sleep, keep clean and take exercise. Find a safe area to go in the event of a rescue attempt. \_\_\_\_\_

**c** If there is an opportunity to get away, take it. Use violence only if you have a good chance of escape. If the pirates are going to kill you, try to escape even if your chances are not good. \_\_\_\_\_

**d** If they take over your ship, stay calm. The first fifteen minutes are very dangerous. Avoid violence and try to stabilize the situation quickly. Co-operate with the pirates and let them feel in control. \_\_\_\_\_

**e** If you're under attack, activate alarms and alert international maritime forces. Maintain full sea speed and make big waves to upset the pirates' boats. If they get close, film them and deploy fire hoses to keep them away. \_\_\_\_\_



**B** Read the report and the list of possible actions. Complete the table of advantages and disadvantages of each action.

**Report**  
Last night twenty pirates hijacked a cargo ship. The pirates say they will kill the crew and set fire to the ship if they don't get \$5 million from the owners. This morning an American warship caught the pirates' mother ship and arrested seven men on board. The US warship is now standing off from the hijacked cargo ship. The navy is ready to attack.

Possible actions	Advantages	Disadvantages
Pay the ransom money.	<i>Will get quick release of vessel and crew.</i>	<i>May encourage more piracy.</i>
Do not pay the ransom.		
Offer less money.		
Wait and do nothing.		
Sink the cargo ship.		
Attack the pirates.		
Punish the arrested men.		
Offer to exchange the arrested men for the ship.		

**C** What do you think is the best thing to do? Explain your decision.

## Speaking

### How should we deal with piracy?


**A** Do you agree or disagree with these statements?

1. Pirates should be punished by death. We should not arrest them, say, 'naughty, naughty,' and release them. We should sink their boats with all hands.
2. Violence only makes more violence and killing pirates increases the risk for seafarers who are held hostage.

## Sea Jargon

### The International Code of Signals (Interco)

**A** List the different ways you can signal for help.

**B**  Listen to the Interco transmissions 1-5 and write the code letters that you hear.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_

**C** Study the transmissions you have just recorded and try to work out which transmission is:

- a an initial call \_
- b a request for help \_
- c a question \_
- d a response \_
- e a course and speed \_

**D** Use the Interco table on the right to decode the transmissions in Exercise B and match them with the standard versions a-e.

- a Question: Is there a danger of explosion? \_\_\_\_
- b The vessel coming to your rescue is on course 140° at 19 knots. \_\_\_\_
- c Calling all stations. This is Hai Peng on channel 16. If you respond, use the International Code of Signals. \_\_\_\_
- d I acknowledge Hai Peng. This is Scorpios on channel 16. Over. \_\_\_\_
- e I am on fire and sinking. I request urgent assistance. \_\_\_\_

**E** Work with another student.

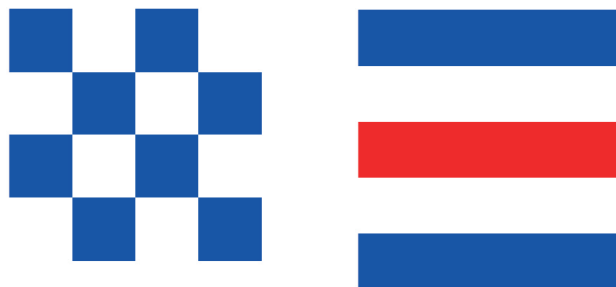
**Student A:** Design an all-stations May-day or Pan-pan call using Interco. Use a call sign, give your position and state the emergency. Transmit the message.

**Student B:** Make an accurate record of the message and respond using Interco.

### The International Code of Signals (INTERCO)

Signalling flags mean the same in all languages. They are used singly, in pairs or in groups of three. You decode them by looking them up in a book.

Each flag stands for a letter, & you can use the NATO phonetic alphabet and transmit Interco messages by radio. You indicate that you intend to use the International Code of Signals by saying the word *Interco* first.



#### Interco table of codes

**AE:** I must abandon vessel  
**AR:** End of transmission  
**C:** Course  
**CB:** Require immediate assistance  
**CB6:** ...and I am on fire.  
**CQ:** Calling all stations  
**CP:** I am proceeding to your assistance.  
**DE:** This is  
**DX:** I am sinking  
**ED:** Your distress signals are understood  
**EL:** Repeat the distress position  
**GR:** The vessel coming to your rescue  
**HW:** I have collided with another vessel.  
**Interco:** Use International Code of Signals  
**IT:** I am on fire  
**JC1:** Is there danger of explosion?  
**JD:** Explosion  
**O:** Man overboard  
**R:** I acknowledge  
**RQ:** Question  
**S:** Speed (in knots)