



## VHF RADIO OPERATION

### Hailing Another Vessel

Listen on the calling channel (Channel 16) for at least 15 seconds to be sure you will not interfere with a conversation already in progress.

If the channel is clear, push down the talk button on your microphone.

Hold the microphone one inch from your mouth, and SLOWLY & CLEARLY call the name of the other boat in a normal tone of voice. Always start a broadcast with the name of the boat you are calling followed by the name of your boat. In this example your boat name is **ALPHA** and the boat you wish to speak with is **ZULU**.

You say (CH. 16):

**"ZULU, ZULU, ZULU THIS IS ALPHA"**

Repeat the name of the boat you are calling, 2 or 3 times if necessary. This first call should not exceed 30 seconds. If you do not make contact, wait at least 2 minutes before repeating the call. Repeat this procedure no more than three times. If you do not make contact during this period, wait 15 minutes before making your next try.

ZULU responds (CH.16).

**"ALPHA, THIS IS ZULU"**

You say (CH.16):

**"ZULU THIS IS ALPHA, GO TO 68"**

You have directed Zulu to switch to Channel 68 (a working channel). Both vessels then switch to Channel 68.

**Tip:** Other working channels include 69, 71, 72

**Tip:** Channel numbers are pronounced using each digit – i.e. 68 is pronounced **"SIX-EIGHT"**.

You say (CH. 68):

**"ZULU THIS IS ALPHA ON SIX-EIGHT"**

ZULU responds (CH. 68).

**"ALPHA, THIS IS ZULU"**

You have now re-established contact on a working channel and can have a conversation. At the conclusion of each sentence or thought; i.e. when you are expecting a reply; end your transmission with **"OVER"**

You say (CH.68):

**"HOW'S THE FISHING WHERE YOU ARE? OVER."**



Keep in mind there only a few working channels for all boaters. Think before you speak and keep your message simple. It should be about your boat's business and not longer than 3 minutes in length. At the conclusion of the conversation each boat then acknowledges completion of the call, and says

**"ALPHA OUT, RETURNING TO ONE-SIX"**

**"ZULU OUT, RETURNING TO ONE-SIX"**

Both vessels return to VHF CH 16.



## **EMERGENCY CALLS**

There are three types of emergency calls that have priority on Channel 16: **MAYDAY** (distress), **PAN-PAN** (urgency) & **SECURITE** (safety)

1. **MAYDAY (pronounced *May-Day*).** **DISTRESS:** Use this call when you are threatened by grave and imminent danger, life threatening emergency or you observe another vessel in distress. Examples are sinking, fire, life threatening medical emergency, observing same of another vessel.
2. **PAN-PAN. (pronounced *Pahn-Pahn*).** **URGENCY:** Use this call when there is a threat to the safety of a person or boat, but the threat is not imminent or life threatening. Examples of PAN-PAN calls are: loss of a person overboard, running out of fuel, losing your way in a fog, getting entangled in fishing gear, or being unable to control or operate your vessel.
3. **SECURITE (pronounced *Say-Cure-It-Tay*.)** **SAFETY:** Use and listen for this call for navigation safety messages. You will hear it used before weather alerts, warnings of navigational hazards, and operational signals (such as when a boat is backing out of a slip or approaching a blind bend). You may use this call to report a navigational hazard such as a partially-sunken object in a busy channel.

To issue a **MAYDAY** call on Channel 16 have ready the following information:

1. Boat name
2. Your GPS position
3. The nature of the emergency
4. Number of passengers on board (all wearing life jackets)
5. Present seaworthiness of vessel
6. Description of vessel (type, color, length)

You say (CH. 16):

**"MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY THIS IS <<Boat Name>>**

**SPEAK SLOWLY & CLEARLY.** Repeat until contact is established.

Coast Guard responds (CH.16).

**"<<Boat Name>> this is Coast Guard sector Los Angeles. Are you in any immediate danger. Over"**

You say (CH. 16):

**"Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles <<State the nature of your emergency>>**

**Our location is << read GPS position from electronic chartplotter or VHF radio>>**

Conversation with Coast Guard will continue...

***Please note that actual VHF conversations and emergencies will vary in format and content. We offer these hypothetical scenarios solely as a guide for training. For CA Guide to Boating Laws & Safety visit [https://dbw.parks.ca.gov/pages/28702/files/DBW\\_ABCs\\_of\\_Boating\\_2017.pdf](https://dbw.parks.ca.gov/pages/28702/files/DBW_ABCs_of_Boating_2017.pdf)***



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