

Know How to Call For Help When Boating

By: Chris Floyd
Emergency Services Director
Capital Area Chapter
American Red Cross

DO I USE MY MARINE RADIO OR WIRELESS PHONE WHEN CALLING FOR EMERGENCY HELP?

Wireless phones may be used to call 9-1-1 during a boating emergency. A wireless phone is an excellent backup communications' device. However, a wireless phone is not a substitute for a VHF-FM marine radio. A marine radio has several distinct advantages over a wireless phone. With the relative low cost and compact size of a marine radio, any boater on any size craft (including canoes and kayaks) should carry a radio.

A marine radio:

1. Is waterproof.
2. Provides immediate notification of distress to any vessel listening on that channel which means quicker assistance.
3. Allows for rescue units to home in on transmission.

EMERGENCY RADIO BOATING PROCEDURES

1. Make sure radio is on and turned to VHF Channel 16.
2. Press microphone button and clearly say:
"MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, THIS IS ..."
(Give the following information: vessel name and/or description - type, color, length).
3. Position and/or location.
4. Nature of emergency.
5. Number of people on board.
6. Release microphone button briefly.
7. Wait for 10 seconds. If no answer, repeat the MAYDAY call.
8. Follow directions and provide information requested by the rescue agency. If situation permits, stand by the radio for further communication with the Coast Guard or another vessel.

