



Radio Use Information Sheet

Channel 16 – Non GMDSS

VHF Radio Telephone

What is Channel 16?

Channel 16 (156.80 MHz) is the International Maritime Channel used for distress, urgency and safety working and voice calling. For non-Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) equipped vessels you are required to maintain a listening watch on Channel 16 and may use it to establish **initial** routine contact with another vessel or a coast station and you should move to a working channel as soon as possible. However, you can use a different working channel to by-pass Channel 16 where you have made a prior arrangement or intend to communicate with a port operations service.

If you are in a distress situation and do not carry a Digital Selective Calling (DSC) radio, you should make your original Distress call on Channel 16. If you do not receive a response, use the primary intership channels (Channels 6 or 8), these are likely to be the next most used channels, and someone should acknowledge your call.

Why is it important to follow the rules?

The rules for the use of Channel 16 are agreed internationally and **MUST** be followed as the lives of your fellow boat users may depend upon being heard on this channel. The rules are designed to provide order and discipline of use on this, the most important marine frequency.

The following is a summary of the rules!

You and anyone likely to use your radio must be familiar with them. **Please note that authorities locally / abroad may ask for proof of radio competency certificate.**

General calls

Always monitor Channel 16.

Use the correct maritime radio telephone operating procedure for establishing contact.

Use your vessel callsign for identification purposes.

Use phonetics to spell out difficult words or abbreviations.

Do not interrupt or interfere with transmissions already in progress - wait for an appropriate break before starting your call.

Give way to communications already in progress, or if asked to do so by a coast station.

Stop calling when a station does not reply to a call sent three times at intervals of two minutes. Resume calling thereafter at three-minute intervals at the earliest, having ascertained first that the station is not communicating with a third station elsewhere. (This does not apply to distress, urgency or safety calls.)

Minimise the amount of time spent establishing contact on Channel 16 (one minute maximum) and then immediately switch to another intership channel - and keep discussions on these other channels to the business of the vessels concerned.

Emergency calls

Only respond directly to a distress call made on Channel 16 when no coast station has acknowledged it after a short interval and you are able to provide assistance. If no coast station does respond give the distress call priority and take steps to acknowledge it and render immediate assistance or seek help.

Stop all transmissions when you hear a distress call being made from another vessel to avoid interference to that distress call.

Know the correct procedures for making and dealing with distress messages and traffic - and train others on board how to receive and make calls.

Avoid making distress calls unless the master/skipper of the vessel orders that he or she is sure that you are in grave or imminent danger; or that another ship or an aircraft is in grave or imminent danger and cannot itself send a signal; or that the ship or aircraft concerned requires immediate assistance or additional help to that immediately available.

Be ready to repeat your distress message on any frequency if you receive no answer on the distress frequency.

Know your vessel callsign to uniquely identify your vessel in distress.

General rules - DO NOT

Transmit without the authority of the master or other person in charge of the vessel unless in an emergency situation.

Operate the radio telephone unless qualified or under the supervision of an appropriately qualified person.

Transmit or circulate false or deceptive safety or identification signals.

Transmit without identification. This means your callsign or vessel name.

Close down a radio telephone before finishing all operations resulting from a distress call, urgency or safety signal.

Broadcast messages or programmes of music (broadcast means to transmit without a reply being expected) except for safety messages.

Make unnecessary transmissions.

Transmit profane, indecent or obscene language.

Use frequencies or channels other than those stipulated in the Ship Radio Licence.

Broadcast messages intended for reception onshore except through a Coast Radio Station, other than as stipulated in the Ship Radio Licence.

For further details of marine radio use contact:

Gibraltar Regulatory Authority
2nd Floor, Eurotowers 4
1 Europort Road
Gibraltar

Tel: +350 20074636

Fax: +350 20072166

email: licensing@gra.gi