



NIUE SHIP REGISTRY

Website: www.niueship.com

EMERGENCY POSITION INDICATING RADIO BEACONS (EPIRBs) (Circular NMC1.2015 (rev3))

A. PURPOSE:

To provide ship owners / managers / operators / masters / officers / classifications societies the requirements for the registration, servicing and maintenance of EPIRBs for Niue flagged vessels.

B. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

MSC.1/Circ.1210/Rev.1 – IMO guidance on the Cospas-Sarsat International 406 MHz Beacon Registration Database

C. INTRODUCTION:

The Maritime Safety Committee, at its ninety-fourth session (17 to 21 November 2014), recognizing the continuous importance of 406 MHz EPIRB registration databases to be available to SAR Authorities at all times, approved the Revised guidance on Cospas-Sarsat International 406 MHz Beacon Registration Database (IBRD) prepared by the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR).

D. DEFINITIONS:

The following abbreviations stand for:

- “EPIRB” – Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons
- “GPS” – Global Positioning System
- “GT” – Gross Tonnage in accordance to ITC 69
- “IBRD” – International 406 MHz Beacon Registration Database
- “NZ” – New Zealand
- “PSC” – Port State Control
- “RO” – Recognized Organization as defined by IMO Resolution A.789(19)
- “SAR” – Search and Rescue
- “SMS” – Safety Management System
- “SOLAS” – International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, as amended
- “SSP” – Ship Security Plan

The term “Administration” shall mean the Niue Ship Registry.

E. APPLICATION:

EPIRBs are required for the following Niue flagged vessels:

- All passenger vessels;
- All commercial yachts; and
- All commercial vessels above 300GT

Niue flagged vessels that are not listed above are also recommended to voluntarily carry EPIRBs.

F. CONTENTS:

1. GENERAL

- 1.1. Under the Cospas-Sarsat international satellite-aided tracking system, polar orbiting satellites are able to detect distress signals from a 406 MHz beacon.

- 1.2. The 406MHz beacon comes in two basic types: those that provide an encoded (GPS) location and those that do not. The satellite system can calculate a beacon's location, but locating a distress site is usually much faster if the beacon signal provides a GPS location.
- 1.3. A 406-MHz beacon designed for use on marine vessels is called an EPIRB (also known as a distress radio beacon or emergency beacon) and it can be activated in a life-threatening emergency to summon assistance from SAR authorities.
- 1.4. When a distress beacon is activated, it transmits a signal that can be detected by satellites as they orbit the earth and "listen" for any activated beacons with the purpose to transmit the beacon signals to ground stations that compute their positions and report to SAR authorities.
- 1.5. Float-free EPIRBs are held in a bracket and fitted with a hydrostatic release that is water-activated, deploying the beacon automatically if the vessel sinks. If the vessel continues to float, then the EPIRB can be manually deployed where a distress situation exists.
- 1.6. In a distress situation, it is important that a beacon is NOT switched off once it has been activated until rescue has commenced or you are advised to do so by the SAR authority.
- 1.7. If an EPIRB has been activated inadvertently, the first and foremost action required would be to **SWITCH OFF** the EPIRB as quickly as possible to avoid the activation of SAR operations.

2. MANDATORY REGISTRATION OF EPIRBs ON THE IBRD

- 2.1. Prior to 11 April 2017, the registration of beacons on Niue flagged vessels were done directly in the IBRD.
- 2.2. After 11 April 2017, all beacons should be registered with the NZ national database at: <https://beacons.org.nz/create-your-account>.
- 2.3. Please refer to the above website which provides a detailed explanation and FAQ with regards to the registration of beacons.
- 2.4. It is the intention of the Administration to have all EPIRBs fitted on Niue flagged vessels registered within the shortest time possible so that there will be a comprehensive record available to nearest SAR centre in the event of an emergency.
- 2.5. Once a beacon is registered, the ship owner / manager should submit a copy of the registered particulars to this Administration (email: operations@niueship.com):
 - 2.5.1. For Single Delivery Voyage (SDV) Registrations – within one (1) week of the issuance of the vessel's Certificate of Registry;
 - 2.5.2. For Normal / Bareboat Charter In Registrations – within one (1) week of the issuance of the vessel's Certificate of Registry and in any case before a vessel's registration can be converted to Permanent status;

and at the same time print out a copy for placement on board the vessel so that surveyors and inspectors may easily verify the beacon registry and the particulars.

3. MAINTENANCE AND TESTING REQUIREMENTS OF EPIRBs

- 3.1. The maintenance requirements are to be complied with in accordance with SOLAS Chap IV Reg 15.9.
- 3.2. Each EPIRB must be tested annually by an authorised shore based service provider for all aspects of operational efficiency with an emphasis on checking emission operational frequencies, coding, and registration.

3.3. The annual test should include:

- 3.3.1. Checking the position and mounting for float-free operation;
- 3.3.2. Verifying the presence of a firmly attached lanyard in good condition, neatly stowed and not attached to the vessel or the mounting bracket;
- 3.3.3. A visual inspection for defects;
- 3.3.4. A self-test routine;
- 3.3.5. A check that the EPIRB identification (15 digit HEX ID) and other information is clearly marked on the outside of the unit;
- 3.3.6. Decoding the transmitted signal and establishing that the decoded HEX ID information is identical to the information and identification marked on the beacon;
- 3.3.7. Checking the registration;
- 3.3.8. Checking the battery expiry date;
- 3.3.9. Checking the hydrostatic release expiry date;
- 3.3.10. Checking the emission in the 406 MHz band using self-test mode (or an appropriate device to avoid transmission of a distress call);
- 3.3.11. Checking that the EPIRB has been maintained (if due) by an approved shore based service provider;
- 3.3.12. Remounting the beacon properly in its bracket, and
- 3.3.13. Verifying the presence of operating instructions.

- 3.4. All applicable Niue flagged vessels should have on board annual test inspection certificate for each EPIRB and, where appropriate, the certificate showing the last five (5) yearly shore maintenance and service. These documents may be requested by PSC and will be required by the RO surveyor completing the annual Cargo Ship Safety radio certificate survey.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Registry at technical@niueship.com or call: +65 6226-2001 for further assistance.