

---

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

---

**1992 No. 1582**

**MERCHANT SHIPPING  
SAFETY**

**The Merchant Shipping (Signals of Distress) Rules 1992**

<i>Made</i>	- - - -	<i>30th June 1992</i>
<i>Laid before Parliament</i>		<i>8th July 1992</i>
<i>Coming into force</i>	- -	<i>29th July 1992</i>

The Secretary of State for Transport, in exercise of powers conferred by sections 21(2) and 36(1) of the Merchant Shipping (Safety Convention) Act 1949<sup>(1)</sup> and now vested in him<sup>(2)</sup>, and of all other powers enabling him in that behalf, hereby makes the following Rules:—

1.—(1) These Rules may be cited as the Merchant Shipping (Signals of Distress) Rules 1992 and shall come into force on 29th July 1992.

(2) The Merchant Shipping (Signals of Distress) Rules 1977<sup>(3)</sup> are hereby revoked.

2. In these Rules the expression “signal of distress” means any of the signals of distress prescribed by regulation 3 of the Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1989<sup>(4)</sup> for use by vessels (other than seaplanes) as signals of distress.

3.—(1) No signal of distress shall be used by any vessel unless the master of the vessel so orders.

(2) The master of the vessel shall not order any signal of distress to be used by his vessel unless he is satisfied—

- (a) that his vessel is in serious and imminent danger, or that another ship or an aircraft or person is in serious and imminent danger and cannot send that signal; and
- (b) that the vessel in danger (whether his own vessel or another vessel) or the aircraft or person in danger, as the case may be, requires immediate assistance in addition to any assistance then available.

(3) The master of a vessel which has sent any signal of distress by means of radio or other means shall cause that signal to be revoked by all appropriate means as soon as he is satisfied that the vessel

---

(1) 1949 c. 43; section 21(2) was amended by the Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1983 (S.I.1983/708), Schedule 2, Part II. In section 36(1), see the definition of “the Minister” (mentioned in section 21(2)).  
(2) See S.I. 1965/145, 1970/1537, 1981/238.  
(3) S.I. 1977/1010, amended by S.I. 1989/1798.  
(4) S.I. 1989/1798.

---

**Status:** This is the original version (as it was originally made). This item of legislation is currently only available in its original format.

---

or aircraft to which or the person to whom the signal relates is no longer in need of assistance as aforesaid.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for Transport

30th June 1992

*Caithness*  
Minister of State,  
Department of Transport

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

*(This note is not part of the Rules)*

These Rules replace the Merchant Shipping (Signals of Distress) Rules 1977 ( “the 1977 Rules”). They give effect to amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea Convention 1974 (Chapter V, Regulation 9) adopted on 11th April 1989 by the Maritime Safety Committee ( “MSC”) of the International Maritime Organization ( “IMO”) at its 57th Session.

The Rules prescribe the circumstances in which the signals of distress prescribed by the Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1989 may be used by vessels (other than seaplanes). The 1977 Rules referred to a situation in which a ship or aircraft was in danger, but the new Rules also refer to a situation in which a person is in danger.

The MSC amendments to which the Rules give effect are included in the Annex to Resolution MSC 13(57), copies of which may be obtained from IMO, 4 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7SR.