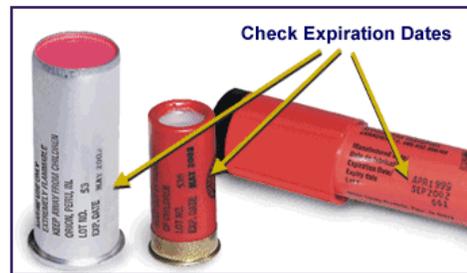


Resource Center

- Overview
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Replacement & Disposal

Pyrotechnic signaling devices (including aerial flares and hand held signals) expire 42 months after the date of manufacture in accordance with the Coast Guard requirements. Typically, this means that you must replace your flares every three boating seasons. The Coast Guard regulations requires that each pyrotechnic signaling device must be stamped with the expiration date. Accordingly, check the expiration dates on your flares and signals as shown below. If they have expired or will expire during the boating season, you must replace them...it's the law!



*Orion also prints the expiration date on all packaging.

Disposal

To dispose of expired marine pyrotechnic distress signals, Orion recommends the following method:

- Ignite hand-held signals flares on land in a safe area, much the same as highway flares would be ignited.
- Contact a local law enforcement or the fire protection agency for their advice on proper visual distress signal disposal.
- Retain flares for back-up use to expand signaling time in the event of an emergency.
- **NEVER** jettison visual distress signals overboard.
- **NEVER** activate marine flares in a non-emergency situation on or near regulated water.
- **NEVER** dispose of flares in household trash.

[Click here to download the U.S. Coast Guard Seal of Safety checklist.](#)

[Click here to download the information from the U.S. Coast Guard on visual distress signal requirements.](#)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Coast Guard Visual Distress Signal Requirements

What is the requirement and where does it apply?

Visual distress signals must be carried on all boats which are operated on the high seas, coastal waters (including the Great Lakes), the territorial seas and all waters directly connected to the great lakes or the territorial seas up to a point where the waters are less than two miles wide.

See what Safety Experts recommend. [Click here.](#)

Who is covered by the requirement?

All boats are covered by the requirement if operating on the designated waters at night. During daytime operation, the following boats do not need to comply with the requirement: (i) recreational boats less than 16 feet in length; (ii) boats participating in organized events, such as races, regattas, and parades; (iii) open sailboats not equipped with propulsion machinery and less than 26 feet in length; and (iv) manually propelled boats.

My boat never breaks down, why should I comply?

First, pursuant to the Coast Guard regulations, the Coast Guard may impose a civil penalty up to \$1,100 for failure to comply with equipment requirements. Second, one never knows when an emergency on the water will occur, whether to you or someone you assist. Risking a fine is one thing; your ability to signal others to a distress situation which could affect you and your family is another.

What types of Visual Distress Signals have been accepted by the Coast Guard?

[View signals table](#)

What type of flares do I need?

There are a number of flares that you can use depending on your boating habits. See Orion's Products Recommendation Guide to find the flares that best meet your needs. [Go >>](#)

How do I know if a signal meets the Coast Guard requirements?

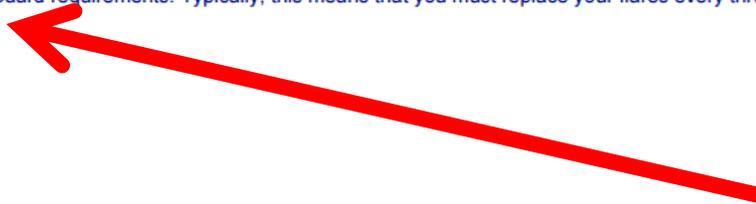
Only visual signals marked with a U.S. Coast Guard approval or certification number meet the Coast Guard requirements.

Since I am covered by the requirement, how many signals do I need to carry?

If you select pyrotechnic signals (including red parachute aerial flares, handheld red signal flares and handheld orange smoke flares) to meet the Coast Guard visual distress signal requirements, **a minimum of three must be carried**. Any combination of the signals can be carried so long as they add up to three signals for day use and three signals for night use. Remember that while three signals are the **legal minimum**, search and rescue experts recommend carrying at least six signals onboard.

Will my visual distress signals expire?

Pyrotechnic signaling devices (including aerial flares and hand held signals) expire 42 months after the date of manufacture in accordance with the Coast Guard requirements. Typically, this means that you must replace your flares every three boating seasons. [More info >>](#)



Disposing of Outdated Flares

I went by the fire department to dispose of outdated flares---they had no clue how to handle--LOL.

Finally told me take them to the landfill and give them to hazardous disposal place there ???

A fire inspector was at my office this morning and I asked him---he said soak them in water and then just put in dumpster !! Said water soak would render them useless !!

Does this make any sense ??

Disposal of Expired Flares

Un-ignited expired emergency flares are dangerous and hazardous. I called my local fire department, the state and spoke to someone at the coast guard and could never find someone to take my expired emergency flares. However, it is my understanding that ignited (used) flares can be discarded in household waste. A few years ago I started to ignite my handheld flares in a metal trash can and then dispose of them in my trash. It worked very well and was a great learning experience because now I know what flares are easy to use and what are more difficult. Today I ignited some expired gun flares into a metal trash can with the lid slightly cracked so I could insert and fire the gun. It worked very well and was a learning experience. Out of the four expired flares only two worked. They were dated 2003. I throw this out as a suggested disposal method for those having difficulty finding someone to take their expired flares.

Expired Flares: What to do?

Since firing them off out back of England's is no longer an option🙄 I'm wondering what you guys do with your expired flares and other signaling devices. I have been accumulating mine in a zip lock bag that I keep in my ditch bag, labeled "Expired." But my accumulation has grown beyond what I really want to keep on board. I've got a bag full of Orion hand held, 12 ga. aerials (the wimpy ones), a Solas parachute and a solas smoke canister...I'm thinking it could be an exciting July 4th this year.

So, what do you guys do with your excess expired flares and such?

Re: Expired Flares: What to do?

I got the same problem, what to do with these? Can't put them in the garbage as they are hazardous waste. Maybe take them to the household waste disposal station?

 **Re: Expired Flares: What to do?**

I get rid of my old ones on 4th of July

 **Re: Expired Flares: What to do?**

I use them to smoke out moles. Light it up, stick it down the mole hole

 **Re: Expired Flares: What to do?**

I use mine to start fires in the burn pile.
They work just as good as a torch.

LD 252: An Act To Improve Safety in the Disposal of Expired Flares

It is perplexing that a device made for boater safety also poses a threat on land and sea.

The United States Coast Guard requires flares (Pyrotechnic Visual Distress Signals or PVDs) on most boats over 16 feet long. Mariners shoot the flares to signal an emergency. Each boat must carry 3 flares for day and night use. The flares expire and must be replaced every 3 to 4 years.

Right now, there is no good way for Maine boaters to dispose of expired flares. They have tried:

- *Firing flares at sea*

This is illegal (an improper distress signal) and introduces toxic chemicals, including potassium perchlorate, strontium, and sulfur, into the ocean.

- *Throwing them in the trash*

This is illegal (flares are classified as hazardous waste) and a fire hazard.

- *Soaking flares in a bucket of water*

Soaking stops the fire risk but creates water pollution; it releases perchlorate into the water which can leach into drinking water and cause thyroid problems when consumed.

- *Shooting flares for training at a Coast Guard station or otherwise*

Boaters may shoot off a small number of flares for periodic training, but not over the water. This does not reduce the huge stockpile of expired flares generated yearly.

- *Shooting them off on the Fourth of July*

Flares are not fireworks and should not be used as such. The Coast Guard has documented incidents where burning flares have landed on boaters or spectators.



The only safe and legal way to dispose of flares is by incineration at high temperature.

The chemicals in flares can harm people and marine life:

- **Potassium perchlorate** interferes with thyroid function, which regulates a person's metabolism, including heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature.

- **Flares also contain Strontium and Sulfur**, which possibly pose additional risks. Strontium may create toxic gases when burned. Sulfur discharged into water has been shown to contribute to more acidic conditions.

We finally have a solution!

LD 252 creates an inexpensive, safe and environmentally protective program to collect and incinerate expired flares using existing local and state equipment and personnel. The bill:

- **Allows the State Fire Marshal to establish collection sites with approved storage containers, arrange transport, and then commence incineration of expired flares in an EPA-approved mobile incinerator already owned by the State**
- **Publicizes collection locations to boaters**
- **Educates the public about the safe disposal of flares**

The bill has so many positives:

- ✓ It protects people's safety by providing a safe way to dispose of potentially dangerous, explosive material.
- ✓ It helps protect the environment.
- ✓ It complies with federal laws, including the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act.
- ✓ It is convenient and will allow the State Fire Marshal to establish collection sites convenient to commercial and recreational boaters.
- ✓ It is voluntary. There are no fines or penalties for boaters for not using this service.
- ✓ It is free to boaters who choose to take advantage of the service.
- ✓ It is cost effective. The program uses existing equipment and personnel.
- ✓ It educates boaters about safe handling and disposal of pyrotechnic flares, and can introduce an alternative to chemical flares— battery powered, LED flares.



LD 252 helps Maine boaters protect Maine's waters and is cost effective!

Friends of Casco Bay is a community-based nonprofit organization founded in 1989, to improve and protect the environmental health of Casco Bay. Home to the Casco **BAYKEEPER**[®], we are a founding member of the international **WATERKEEPER**[®] ALLIANCE.

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