

Flashing lights for rescue vessels

Issued December 2017

Background

Marine rescue services, such as Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) Queensland, the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard (AVCG) and Airservices Australia (Aviation Rescue and Firefighting Services), operate rescue vessels (Rescue Vessels) for the purpose of conducting marine rescue activities in Queensland waters.

In line with tradition, emergency and compliance authorities Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QBFP), Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFRS) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) have adopted the use of blue flashing lights on vessels (Emergency and Compliance Vessels) when carrying out emergency, compliance, enforcement and rescue functions in Queensland waters.

Purpose

This sets out MSQ's position for the display of special purpose (flashing) lights by Rescue Vessels, in the course of marine rescue activities in Queensland waters.

It is intended that this will assist to:

- promote consistency in the display of lights by Rescue Vessels;
- increase the visibility of Rescue Vessels during daylight hours and at night while they are taking part in marine rescue operations;
- avoid Rescue Vessels being confused with general maritime traffic, and Emergency and Compliance Vessels;
- avoid confusion with the IALA buoyage system; and
- avoid contravention of the COLREGs.

This is consistent with the objective of achieving an appropriate balance between safety and cost as set out in TOMSA.

This document does not affect the use of blue flashing lights on Emergency and Compliance Vessels operated by emergency and compliance authorities QPS, QBFP, MSQ, QFRS and QPWS.

Situation

The COLREGs allow a ship to exhibit such additional lights that cannot be mistaken for the lights prescribed under the COLREGs, do not impair their visibility or distinctive character, and interfere with the keeping of a proper look-out.

To enhance the visibility of all Rescue Vessels while they are taking part in marine rescue operations, a consistent display of special purpose (flashing) light is desirable.

A Rescue Vessel shall exhibit an all-round yellow light:

- flashing at regular intervals at a frequency of 90 flashes or fewer per minute;
- placed below the masthead light so as not to impair the visibility or distinctive character of any lights prescribed under the COLREGs, or interfere with the keeping of a proper look-out; and
- only when the Rescue Vessel is operating:
 - in the course of search and rescue activities (which exclude non-emergency operations and transiting);
 - to warn others of a maritime hazard;
 - in accordance with a direction given by a compliance authority, for example, when tasked by authorities to operate at a safe speed in excess of the regulated speed limit.

In order to avoid Rescue Vessels from being confused with Emergency and Compliance Vessels, a Rescue Vessel shall only exhibit an all-round flashing yellow light as described above.

Further information

For further information contact your local Maritime Safety Queensland office:

Airlie Beach	4841 4500
Bundaberg	4132 6600
Cairns	4052 7400
Gladstone	4971 5200
Hervey Bay	4194 9600
Mackay	4944 3700
Mooloolaba	5425 1825
Brisbane	3632 7500
Gold Coast	5585 1810
Townsville	4421 8100