

Securite, Securite: EPIRB registration error leads to loss of life

Some of us who have registered our EPIRBs with NOAA via the web have received an email suggesting that we check to be sure that the registration information, in particular the 15 digit identification code, matches the numbers on the actual EPIRB on our boat. The importance of doing so is not evident in the NOAA email. It was only upon reading an article at page 18 of the July issue of "*Soundings*" magazine that it becomes clear that a discrepancy in one of those fifteen digits contributed to the deaths of six New Jersey fishermen in March.

The chain of events is complicated but the long and short of it is that because a "C" in the registration form sent into NOAA had been transcribed as an "0", the EPIRB signal was not properly identified on the first satellite hit. This led to an hour and one half delay before the first help was dispatched to men floating in 40 degree water with air temps of 30 degrees. By the time help arrived, only one out of seven was still alive. The two page article contains much information regarding EPIRBs and related SAR activities that we strongly suggest everyone read.

Of even more importance, please compare your NOAA issued EPIRB registration form with the actual numbers on the unit aboard your boat. I know that a number of our East Coast members are planning to venture East over the next couple of years and will be in areas beyond the normal range of VHF calls for assistance. A rapid response to your EPIRB could mean the difference between early rescue and death.

Fair Winds,

Garry and Leslie Schneider