

Marine VHF around Campbell River – a short summary

Compliments of Ripple Rock Squadron (www.riplerocksquadron.com)

VHF channels around Campbell River

Channel	Use	Remarks
16	Distress and Calling	Monitor this when not communicating on a working channel.
83A	Victoria Coast Guard Radio	Use for non-emergency, such as radio checks. Contact them directly on that channel (say the channel you are calling on)
66A	Marinas	All marinas on the B.C. Coast stand by on this channel.
71	Vessel Traffic Services	Used by large ships transiting Discovery Passage and Johnstone Straits. (see On the Water/ Sharing the Channels on our website)
10	Winchelsea Control	Used by military in the exercise areas, such as Whiskey Gulf.
06, 09, 14, 67, 68, 69, 72, 73, 87A	Working Channels (see notes below)	Check to see if channel is in use before making your call to another vessel and suggesting this as a working channel. (some channels may only transmit at 1 watt – see your manual)

- **Do not use Channel 70, 87B or 88B. They are reserved for digital systems only (GMDSS and AIS).**
- Other channels may appear quiet enough to use as a working channel, but they may be reserved for other uses. Always monitor first. Channels 11 and 12 are used by VTS in the lower Georgia Straits and Vancouver, as well as further North. (info on VTS & Weather Channels is available from the Radio Aids to Marine Navigation – see website links). 4A and 61A are reserved for Canadian Coast Guard.
- If the channel number contains an “A” (or “B”), such as 83A, there can be a duplex or simplex version. Check radio is in the right “mode”. Generally, Canadian or US, not International (see your manual).

Making a Distress (grave and imminent danger to life situation) call and message - example

Structure - Send all together and all on Channel 16		What you say
Distress Call	Identify priority	Mayday Mayday Mayday
	Standard wording to indicate sender	This is
	Identify sending vessel	Your vessel's name (repeat up to 3 times)
Distress Message	Start of Message	Mayday Your vessel's name
	Location - lat/lon or range/bearing to a feature	Example Position 3 miles SE of Cape Mudge
	Nature of distress	Example Struck a log and taking on water
	Nature of assistance needed	Example Require Pumps *
	Indicate message finished, waiting for reply	Your vessel's name Over

* Time permitting, any additional information, such as;

- How many people are aboard - so if the vessel sinks, rescuers know how many to look for.
- Description of the vessel - so the rescuers know they have sighted the correct vessel.
- Intentions – heading for nearby shore, preparing to abandon into skiff, or into water in lifejackets.
- Additional safety equipment - portable VHF, EPIRB, Spot, cell phone in sealed plastic bag, Life raft, ... should be included in the message. Victoria Coast Guard radio should respond first, and they will want those details. The Captain's priority is the safety of their passengers and vessel and, if busy dealing with the situation, he/she may not have time to respond to further communications. But details such as those above will assist your rescuers. Maybe a passenger can be asked to be the communicator.

All further transmissions regarding the distress start with the word Mayday.

If you have a DSC radio (it has a red distress button) and use the button for the initial call (lat/lon updated first if no GPS connected), do the above mayday on 16 after, as not all vessels have DSC radios. Include your MMSI in the verbal call, after vessel name. Victoria will contact you on 16 (more about GMDSS overleaf).

Radio procedure continued.

- On hearing Mayday, all other vessels should cease transmission, unless needed for Mayday Relay.
- For routine calling of another vessel, say the other vessels name (up to 3 times) then “this is”, identify your vessel, “go to”, then the working channel to switch to (check it first to make sure it is not in use), then “Over”. The other vessel should reply in the same format, repeating the channel number and “Out”. You should both then switch to the working channel and establish communications. (If there is no response to your non-urgent call, you can try one more time, but then wait for several minutes before trying again.) Also, for routine calls, use low power on your radio when possible, such as within sight.

Some common terms (standard terminology reduces misunderstanding and speeds things up)

Term	Meaning
Seelonce (or Seelonce Distress)	Do not transmit, distress in progress
Prudonce	Permission given to transmit high priority messages only
Seelonce Feenee	Distress finished, you may transmit again
Pan-Pan Pan-Pan Pan-Pan	Prefix for an urgent (but not distress) call
Security Security Security	Prefix for safety Message - Navigation Hazard or Weather Warning
Over	Transmission ended, please respond.
Out	Transmission ended, no response expected.
Roger	I have received your message.
Stand by	Wait until you hear further from me.
I say again	Use instead of “I repeat”.
Acknowledge	Let me know you have received and understood.
Affirmative	Yes
Negative	No
Correction	An error has been made, correct version follows.

- Don’t use “10” code
- “Over and Out” is contradictory. It is only used in the movies.

Phonetic Alphabet (used when transmission quality is poor)

A – ALFA	F – FOXTROT	K – KILO	P – PAPA	U – UNIFORM	Z – ZULU
B – BRAVO	G – GOLF	L – LIMA	Q – QUEBEC	V – VICTOR	
C – CHARLIE	H – HOTEL	M – MIKE	R – ROMEO	W – WHISKEY	
D – DELTA	I – INDIA	N – NOVEMBER	S – SIERRA	X – X-RAY	
E – ECHO	J – JULIET	O – OSCAR	T – TANGO	Y – YANKEE	

- Numbers are said one digit at a time; 1 = One, 2 = Two 9 = Nine (not Niner), 0 = Zero . = Decimal

GMDSS (Global Maritime Distress and Safety System)

Along with digital distress calls, GMDSS can be used to contact other GMDSS vessels or stations. It works somewhat like a cell phone, using an MMSI (Maritime Mobile Service Identity) number. Canadian vessel MMSI all start with 316, a Canadian fleet may start with 0316, and Canadian shore stations start with 00316.

An ROC(M) [Restricted Operator’s Licence (Marine)] is required to operate any marine radio. This handout is only a very basic review of procedures. Ripple Rock Power Squadron offers the ROC(M) course along with advanced boating safety courses. Please go to www.riplerocksquadron.com for more information.