Know how to use them

Flares are best used when you believe there is chance of it being seen.

The method used to fire flares varies widely between flare types and manufacturers. The firing instructions are always printed on the flare, and you should be familiar with your flare’s method. Hand-held red flares, especially, burn very hot and may spill glowing embers. Hold it downwind so that embers don’t spill into the vessel and point it downwards while in your hand to avoid being burnt.

If you see a flare, contact the Water Police or phone 000 to report it.

Storage

Flares should always be readily accessible:
• stored in a waterproof container (marked with the registration number of your boat);
• in a place where they don’t receive too much pounding in rough conditions;
• away from dampness; and
• away from heat sources above 60°C.

Expiry dates

Flares must be within the expiry date and maintained in serviceable condition at all times. Check them regularly to ensure they have not been rendered unserviceable by exposure to moisture. Mildew or bubbling of paper coatings may indicate this.

Disposal

Do not discard unserviceable or out of date flares in general rubbish collections or land fill. Visit the DoT website for disposal locations.

Unauthorised use of flares

There are severe penalties for the improper use of flares. Flares have a very serious purpose. Falsely indicating distress rightly carries a severe penalty, but it also wastes a lot of time and resources – possibly weakening the ability to respond to a genuine emergency.

Do not leave flares in your vessel when it is not in use, and keep them away from children.
**Types of flares**

**Orange smoke flares**

These are designed for day use only and have no luminosity. They emit a cloud of orange smoke. Orange hand-held flares burn for about 60 seconds.

The buoyant canister, which is safe for use in petrol or oil covered water, burns for about three minutes. Potential sighting range by day is 4 kilometres, although this can drop to less than 1 kilometre in a fresh breeze. These flares are especially visible from aircraft, even on windy days.

**Red hand-held flares**

These are designed for use both night and day and burn for about 45 seconds at 15,000 candle power. Potential sighting range at night is 10–12 kilometres and about 4-6 kilometres during the day.

**Parachute flares**

These are designed for use both night and day. They project a rocket to 300 metres high and then deploy a parachute-suspended red flare, which burns for about 40 seconds at 30,000 candle power. Potential sighting range is 15 kilometres by day and 40 kilometres at night.

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**For offshore waters**

More than five nautical miles from the mainland, or more than one nautical mile from an island situated more than five nautical miles from the mainland, you will need:

- two hand-held orange smoke flares or one orange smoke canister; and
- two parachute flares.

If you operate both inshore and offshore you only need to carry an offshore set of flares.

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**Required flares**

All boats operating outside protected waters must carry flares. The type you need depends on how far offshore you travel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance from shore</th>
<th>Smoke flares</th>
<th>Incandescent flares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inshore</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 5 nautical miles from the mainland, or within one nautical mile from an island situated more than 5 nautical miles from the mainland</td>
<td>2 hand-held orange smoke flares or 1 orange smoke canister</td>
<td>2 hand-held red flares or 2 parachute flares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offshore</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 nautical miles from the mainland, or more than one nautical mile from an island situated more than 5 nautical miles from the mainland</td>
<td>2 hand-held orange smoke flares or 1 orange smoke canister</td>
<td>2 parachute flares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only an offshore set of flares is required if operating in both inshore and offshore areas.

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**Flares and their characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of flare</th>
<th>Suitable use</th>
<th>Burn time</th>
<th>Sighting range potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smoke flares</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange hand-held smoke flare</td>
<td>Day use only; No luminosity; Orange cloud of smoke; Especially visible from aircraft</td>
<td>60 seconds</td>
<td>Day: 4 km; Note: less than 1 km in a fresh breeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange smoke canister flare</td>
<td>Day use only; No luminosity; Orange cloud of smoke; Especially visible from aircraft</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
<td>Day: 4 km; Note: less than 1 km in a fresh breeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incandescent flares</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red hand-held flares</td>
<td>Night and day; Emits 15,000 candle power of light</td>
<td>45 seconds</td>
<td>Day: 4-6 km; Night: 10-12 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parachute flares</td>
<td>Night and day; Emits 30,000 candle power of light; Propels a parachute-suspended red flare to an altitude of approximately 300 metres</td>
<td>40 seconds</td>
<td>Day: 15 km; Night: 40 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>