

Which Flarepack Should You Choose?

The type and quantity of distress flares you should have on board will simply depend on the distance you intend to travel from shore.

1. The Inshore Zone

The inshore zone is classified as being up to 3 miles from shore.

On a day with reasonable weather and visibility, a person stood on a beach (ie at sea level) should be able to see a red hand flare or an orange hand smoke flare burning on a boat up to 3 miles off-shore.

In the Inshore zone a small selection of hand flares are normally adequate. These are most commonly supplied in an Inshore Distress Flare Pack and consist of:

- 2 red hand flares
- 2 orange hand smoke flares.

2. The Coastal Zone

The Coastal zone is classified as up to 7 miles from shore.

It is generally accepted that 7 miles from shore is the visible horizon on a reasonable day with reasonable visibility. That means a red hand flare being used on a boat that is between 3 and 7 miles from shore may not be visible to a person stood on the beach (ie at sea level) due to the curve of the Earth and the sea conditions.

In these circumstances a rocket flare would be required so the distress signal is deployed at a greater height and can therefore be seen over a much greater distance.

In the coastal zone a combination of hand flares and rocket flares are normally the best choice. These are supplied in a Coastal Distress Flare Pack and consist of:

- 2 red hand flares
- 2 red parachute rocket flares
- 2 orange hand smoke flares.

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3. Offshore Zone

The offshore zone is classified as over 7 miles from shore.

At distances of over 7 miles from shore a boat will normally be over the visible horizon and it is extremely unlikely that a person on a beach or on a cliff top would be able to see a hand flare being used on the deck of a boat.

In these circumstances a rocket flare that projects up to 350m in height is the only distress flare that could attract attention from over the horizon.

In the offshore zone it is recommended that a vessel carries a substantial distress flare inventory that includes a quantity of rocket flares for long-range signalling as well as hand flares for attracting the attention of other vessels that are within sight, or for signalling to aircraft.

An Offshore Distress Flare Pack consists of:

- 4 red hand flares
- 4 red parachute rocket flares
- 2 buoyant orange smoke flares