STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2026 No. 306

MERCHANT SHIPPING

SAFETY

The Merchant Shipping (EPIRB and PLB Registration and Radiocommunications) (Amendment) Regulations 2026

Made - - - -	*18th March 2026*
Laid before Parliament	*24th March 2026*
Coming into force	*15th April 2026*

The Secretary of State makes these Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 85(1), (3)(a), (c), (d), (e), (f), (h), (k), (l), (n), (o), (p) and (q) and (5) and (7), 86(1)(a), (b), (c) and (d) and 302(1) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995(**a**), section 112(1)(a) and (c) and (3)(b) and (5) of the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003(**b**), and with the consent of the Treasury.

The Secretary of State has consulted such persons in the United Kingdom as the Secretary of State considers will be affected by the exercise of powers in this instrument, and the organisations in the United Kingdom who appear to the Secretary of State to be representative of such persons, in accordance with section 86(4) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 and section 112(7)(c) of the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003.

PART 1

Preliminary

Citation, commencement and extent

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Merchant Shipping (EPIRB and PLB Registration and Radiocommunications) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 and come into force on 15th April 2026.

(2) These Regulations extend to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Amendments and revocation

2.—(1) The Schedule contains minor and consequential amendments.

(**a**) 1995 c. 21. Sections 85 and 86 were amended by the Merchant Shipping and Maritime Security Act 1997 (c. 28), sections 8 and 29(2) and Schedule 7. Section 85 was amended by the British Overseas Territories Act 2002 (c. 8), section 2(3). There are other amendments but none is relevant. Sections 85 and 86 are applied to hovercraft by the Hovercraft (Application of Enactments) Order 1989 (S.I. 1989/1350), to which there are amendments but none is relevant.

(**b**) 2003 c. 20, to which there are amendments but none is relevant.

(2) The Merchant Shipping (EPIRB Registration) Regulations 2000(**a**) are revoked.

Interpretation

3.—(1) In these Regulations—

"EPIRB" means an emergency position-indicating radio beacon operating in the frequency band 406.0-406.1 MHz capable of transmitting a distress alert via satellite to a rescue coordination centre and transmitting signals for on-scene locating;

"hovercraft" has the meaning given in section 4(1) of the Hovercraft Act 1968(**b**);

"Merchant Shipping Notice" means a notice described as such and issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (an executive agency of the Department for Transport) and includes a reference to any document amending or replacing that notice which is considered by the Secretary of State to be relevant from time to time and is specified in a Merchant Shipping Notice;

"PLB" means a personal locator beacon which—

(a) is a portable device, manually activated, which transmits a distress signal in the band 406.0-406.1 MHz; and

(b) as a minimum, has a homing signal on 121.5 MHZ;

"ship" means—

(a) a United Kingdom ship(**c**); or

(b) a hovercraft registered in the United Kingdom(**d**).

(2) For the purposes of these Regulations, where a ship is operated by a person other than its owner, whether on behalf of the owner by a managing agent or some other person, or on that person's own behalf, a reference to the owner is to be construed as including a reference to that person.

Application

4.—(1) The provisions of these Regulations specified in paragraph (2) apply to ships wherever they may be.

(2) The provisions are—

(a) regulation 3 (interpretation); and

(b) the regulations in Part 2 (registration requirements) and Part 3 (enforcement).

PART 2

Registration Requirements

Requirements in relation to EPIRB registration

5.—(1) The owner and master of a ship must ensure that every EPIRB carried on that ship is registered with the Secretary of State and that the registered particulars referred to in paragraph (2) are correct.

(**a**) S.I. 2000/1850.

(**b**) 1968 c. 59. Section 1(1)(h) was amended by the Supreme Court Act 1981 (c. 54), Schedule 5, and the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 (c. 4), section 59(5), Schedule 11, Part 1, paragraph 1(2). There are other amendments to the Act but none is relevant.

(**c**) A United Kingdom ship is defined in section 85(2) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

(**d**) A hovercraft is registered in the United Kingdom in accordance with Part 1 of the Hovercraft (General) Order 1972 (S.I. 1972/674).

(2) The registered particulars are the particulars specified in paragraph 2.1 of Merchant Shipping Notice 1924 (M+F)(**a**).

(3) The owner and master must, where there is a change in the particulars registered in respect of an EPIRB under paragraph (1), give written notice of the change to the Secretary of State as soon as reasonably practicable.

Requirements in relation to PLB registration

6.—(1) A person ("the PLB owner") must ensure that every PLB which is—

(a) owned by the PLB owner; and

(b) carried on board a ship,

is registered with the Secretary of State and that the registered particulars referred to in paragraph (2) are correct.

(2) The registered particulars are the particulars specified in paragraph 3.1 of Merchant Shipping Notice 1924 (M+F).

(3) The PLB owner must, where there is a change in the particulars registered in respect of a PLB, give written notice of the change to the Secretary of State as soon as reasonably practicable.

PART 3

Enforcement

Offences and penalties

7.—(1) If the owner and master enables a ship to proceed, or attempt to proceed, to sea or on any voyage, or arrive within United Kingdom waters, in breach of a requirement in regulation 5(1) or (3), the owner and the master are each guilty of an offence in respect of each case of non-compliance.

(2) A person in breach of a requirement in regulation 6(1) or (3) is guilty of an offence in respect of each case of non-compliance.

(3) An offence under paragraph (1) or (2) is punishable—

(a) on summary conviction—

(i) in England and Wales by a fine; or

(ii) in Scotland or Northern Ireland by a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum; or

(b) on conviction on indictment by imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or a fine, or both.

(4) It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under this regulation to prove that the person charged took all reasonable steps to avoid the commission of the offence.

Detention

8.—(1) For the purposes of this regulation, any reference to "the Act" is a reference to the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

(2) Where a person with power to detain a ship has clear grounds for believing that there is a contravention of any of the requirements of these Regulations in relation to any EPIRB or PLB carried on that ship, the ship may be detained in the United Kingdom.

(**a**) Merchant Shipping Notice 1924 (M+F) is available on https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/merchant-shipping-notices-msns and in hard copy from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Spring Place, 105 Commercial Road, Southampton SO15 1EG (telephone 020 3817 2000 and email infoline@mcga.gov.uk).

(3) Section 284 of the Act (enforcing detention of a ship)(**a**) applies where a ship is liable to be detained under this regulation as if—

(a) references to detention of a ship under the Act were references to detention of the ship in question under this regulation; and

(b) subsection (7) were omitted.

(4) Where a ship is liable to be detained under this regulation, the person detaining the ship must serve on the master a detention notice which—

(a) states the grounds of the detention; and

(b) requires the terms of the notice to be complied with until the ship is released by any person mentioned in section 284(1) of the Act.

(5) Subject to paragraph (6), section 96 (references of detention notices to arbitration)(**b**) and section 97 (compensation in connection with invalid detention of a ship) of the Act apply in relation to a detention notice issued pursuant to this regulation as they apply in relation to detention notices issued pursuant to section 95 (power to detain dangerously unsafe ship)(**c**).

(6) For the purposes of paragraph (5)—

(a) section 96 of the Act applies as if—

(i) subsection (3) were omitted;

(ii) the words "as a dangerously unsafe ship" in subsection (5) were omitted;

(iii) subsection (11) were omitted; and

(b) sections 96 and 97 of the Act apply as if "the relevant inspector" means a person issuing the detention notice pursuant to this regulation.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for Transport

Keir Mather
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
18th March 2026 Department for Transport

We consent

Stephen Morgan
Christian Wakeford
17th March 2026 Two of the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury

(**a**) Section 284 was amended by paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the Merchant Shipping and Maritime Security Act 1997 (c. 28) and S.I. 2015/664.

(**b**) Section 96(7) was amended by Part 1 of Schedule 10 to the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 (c. 15) and by Schedule 11 to the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 (c. 4). Section 96(10) was repealed by Schedule 4 to the Arbitration Act 1996 (c. 23).

(**c**) Section 95 was amended by paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 to the Merchant Shipping and Maritime Security Act 1997.

SCHEDULE

Regulation 2(1)

PART 1

Amendments in relation to the Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) Regulations 1998 etc.

Amendment of the Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) Regulations 1998

1.—(1) The Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) Regulations 1998(**a**) are amended as follows.

(2) In regulation 2 (interpretation), omit the definition of "category A, B, C and D waters".

(3) In regulation 3(2), omit paragraph (d).

(4) In regulation 7, for the definition of "EPIRB" substitute—

> ""EPIRB" means an emergency position-indicating radio beacon operating in the frequency band 406.0-406.1 MHz capable of transmitting a distress alert via satellite to a rescue coordination centre and transmitting signals for on-scene locating;".

Amendment of the Merchant Shipping (Fees) Regulations 2018

2.—(1) The table in paragraph 5 (fees for inspections, etc.) of Part 1 (surveys, inspections and applications for exemption) of Schedule 1 (fees under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995) to the Merchant Shipping (Fees) Regulations 2018(**b**) is amended as follows.

(2) Under heading H (radio and navigational equipment)—

(a) in the entry for the Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) Regulations 1998, in the third column—

(i) omit "1999/1957" and "2025/1280"; and

(ii) for "2016/1025" substitute—

"2018/1221

2021/1316

2022/1219

2023/246

2023/1216

2025/1280

2026/306".

(b) omit the entry for the Merchant Shipping (EPIRB Registration) Regulations 2000;

(c) at the end insert—

(i) in the first column, "The Merchant Shipping (Radiocommunications) (Amendment) Regulations 2021";

(ii) in the second column, "2021/1316";

(iii) in the third column—

"2022/1219

(**a**) S.I. 1998/2070, amended by S.I. 2000/2687, 2005/2114, 2016/1025, 2018/1221, 2021/1316, 2022/1219, 2023/246, 2023/1216 and 2025/1280.

(**b**) S.I. 2018/1104, amended by S.I. 2025/1103; there are other amendments which are not relevant to these Regulations.

2023/246

2023/1216

2025/1195

2026/306".

Amendment of the Merchant Shipping (Radiocommunications) (Amendment) Regulations 2021

3.—(1) The Merchant Shipping (Radiocommunications) (Amendment) Regulations 2021(**a**) are amended as follows.

(2) In regulation 10 (radio installations and equipment), for paragraphs (d) to (f) substitute—

"(d) regulation 9 (radio equipment: sea area A2);

(e) regulation 10 (radio equipment: sea area A3);

(f) regulation 11 (radio equipment: sea area A4).".

PART 2

Amendment of the Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023

Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023

1. For paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023(**b**) substitute—

"Application of the Merchant Shipping (EPIRB and PLB Registration) (Radiocommunications) (Amendment) Regulations 2026

2.—(1) The following provisions of the Merchant Shipping (EPIRB and PLB Registration and Radiocommunications) (Amendment) Regulations 2026(**c**) apply in relation to watercraft as they apply in relation to ships.

(2) Regulation 3 (interpretation), for the purposes of interpreting an applied shipping provision mentioned in this paragraph.

(3) Regulation 5 (requirement in relation to EPIRB registration), as if—

(a) in paragraph (1)—

(i) the reference to an owner and master of a ship was a reference to an owner and operator of a watercraft;

(ii) the reference to a ship was a reference to a watercraft;

(b) for paragraph (2) there were substituted—

"(2) The registered particulars referred to in paragraph (1) are the particulars specified in paragraph 2.1 of Merchant Shipping Notice 1924 (M+F).";

(c) in paragraph (3), the reference to an owner and master of a ship was a reference to an owner and operator of a watercraft.

(4) Regulation 6 (requirement in relation to PLB registration), as if—

(a) in paragraph (1)(b), the reference to a ship was a reference to a watercraft;

(b) for paragraph (2) there were substituted—

(**a**) S.I. 2021/1316, as amended by S.I. 2022/1219, 2023/246, 2023/1216 and 2025/1195.
(**b**) S.I. 2023/35.
(**c**) S.I. 2026/306.

"(2) The registered particulars referred to in paragraph (1) are the particulars specified in paragraph 3.1 of Merchant Shipping Notice 1924 (M+F).".

(5) Regulation 7 (offences and penalties), as if in paragraph (1)—

(a) the reference to the owner and master was a reference to the owner and operator of the watercraft;

(b) the reference to a ship was a reference to a watercraft.

(6) Regulation 8 (detention), as if—

(a) in paragraphs (2) and (4), the reference to a ship was a reference to a watercraft;

(b) in paragraph (4), the reference to the master of the ship was a reference to the owner of the watercraft.".

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations prescribe new requirements for the registration of emergency position-indicating radio beacons ("EPIRBs") and personal locator beacons ("PLBs") which are carried on, or carried by persons on board, United Kingdom ships and hovercraft.

These Regulations revoke (in regulation 2(2)) and replace the Merchant Shipping (EPIRB Registration) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000/1850) which prescribed registration requirements for EPIRBs alone, and (in Part 2 of the Schedule) make consequential amendments to the Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023 (S.I. 2023/35) so as to apply the new registration requirements to watercraft as they apply to ships and hovercraft.

Part 1 (regulations 1 to 4) makes general provision including interpretation and application.

Regulation 2(1) gives effect to a number of amendments contained in Part 1 of the Schedule. Part 1 of the Schedule includes provision which amends the Merchant Shipping (Radiocommunications) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 2021/1316) to give effect to amendments to Chapter IV (radiocommunications) of the Annex to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 ("the Convention"), as well as provision which amends the Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) Regulations 1998 (S.I. 1998/2070) and the Merchant Shipping (Fees) Regulations 2018 (S.I. 2018/1104).

Part 2 (regulations 5 and 6) makes provision for the registration requirements in respect of EPIRBs and PLBs. The information required to be registered is set out in Merchant Shipping Notice 1924 (M+F), and this is given effect by regulations 5(2) and 6(2) for EPIRBs and PLBs respectively.

Part 3 (regulations 7 and 8) makes provision for enforcement. Regulation 7 makes it an offence by the owner and master of a ship if that ship is used in contravention of the registration requirements in regulation 5(1) or (3), as well as making it an offence by a person (the owner of a PLB) to fail to register particulars of the PLB in accordance with regulation 6(1) or (3). Regulation 8 contains power to detain a ship in cases of non-compliance with these Regulations.

Merchant Shipping Notice 1924 (M+F) is available from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) of Spring Place, 105 Commercial Road, Southampton SO15 1EG (telephone 020 3817 2000 and email infoline@mcga.gov.uk) and on https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/merchant-shipping-notices-msns.

The Convention and its Protocol of 1988 may be obtained in copy from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), 4 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7SR and both are available on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) treaties database (https://treaties.fcdo.gov.uk/responsive/app/consolidatedSearch/). The text of the IMO Resolutions amending the Convention and Protocol may be obtained from the IMO in hard copy or at https://www.imo.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/IndexofIMOResolutions/Pages/Default.aspx.

A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no, or no significant, impact on the private or voluntary sector is foreseen.

An Explanatory Memorandum and a de minimis assessment have been prepared and are published alongside the instrument on www.legislation.gov.uk.

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