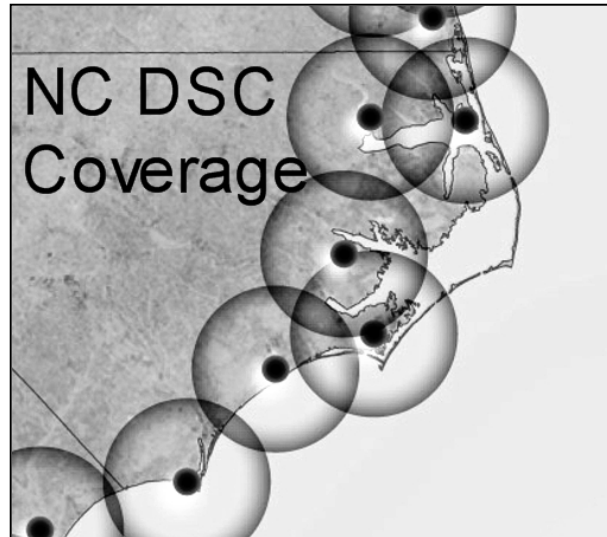


Coast Guard Activates Digital Selective Calling (DSC) Distress Monitoring for Our Area

Did you catch the news on June 22 where a family was rescued off their sinking boat 8 miles off Bogue Banks? The immediate and successful rescue was enabled by our area's newly operational Coast Guard DSC system. What is DSC? DSC (now on most marine VHF radios) provides a digital link to instantly send an automatically formatted distress alert to the Coast Guard. Using tall, new land-based antennas the Coast Guard now can monitor for distress transmissions well off the beach along much of our coast (see below). Prior to activation of the NC DSC Sector in June, DSC only worked on a boat-to-boat basis.

So, how do you use DSC? In case of emergency when you press the 'Distress' button on your radio (in many radios, for at least 5 seconds duration), DSC instantly will relay vital information to the Coast Guard to facilitate rescue. It's simple to use - even a first-time guest on your boat can signal for help in a crisis. But in order for the system to function properly, it is imperative that you: 1) Have a DSC-equipped radio and GPS, and 2) Ensure that it is set up correctly. If you are a boater, DSC can save your and your family's lives.



The service is FREE. Imagine that! DSC/GPS-enabled radios:

- Provide a one-button emergency transmit capability that sends out your boat's unique ID number (Maritime Mobile Service Identity ID number - go to <http://www.boatus.com/mmsi/> site for info) and, if properly connected to a GPS, your boat's latitude and longitude position.
- Continue sending the distress signal, even if the captain is incapacitated.
- Allow for non-experienced user to send goof-proof continuous distress messages.
- Can privately hail another DSC-equipped vessel, or shore station, if you have their MMSI number. It's like having a 'VHF phone number'; this avoids having to monitor high-traffic channels to get a hail from your boating buddy. It even 'rings' your radio, similar to a telephone, notifying you that you have a call and then switches you automatically to the channel your caller is waiting on. All you need is your and your buddy's MMSI number.
- Allow you and your friends, equipped with DSC, to exchange position information electronically. (You'll have to read up on this little-known capability as space here doesn't allow a full discussion.)

DSC coupled with GPS is a Godsend to the small boater. Get it. Learn how to use it, and Don't leave home without it. If your radio doesn't have DSC, think hard about getting one (and GPS if need be). Your life may be at stake. For a link to a full Coast Guard DSC article on DSC go to <http://www.adamscreek.com/sltfc/> and click on DSC Services.