

DSC Needs GPS to be Effective

The U.S. Coast Guard has recently invested hundreds of millions of dollars in [Rescue 21](#), an extensive system of radios and direction finders that bring amazing new capabilities to Search and Rescue (SAR). The new system has a high success rate for finding and retrieving those in distress in record time and at modest expense. The old methods of grid searches over open water take time and consume SAR assets and can cost upwards of \$100,000 per incident.

However, one of the most powerful features of the new system is not always available because of inaction by boaters. USCG has been frustrated that 90% of recreational boaters have neglected to take advantage of Distress Alert, the position indicating feature of Digital Selective Calling (DSC) radios. This capability is the heart of near-coastal and inshore signaling under Rescue 21. They want us to spread the word and get the boating community to register their DSC radios and connect them to their GPS so that position and time can be broadcast in a distress situation. There are three things the boater must do to implement this feature and thereby greatly increase their odds of survival in the event of an accident.

1. **Register** your radio to obtain an MMSI number. [USPS and several other providers offer online services that provide numbers free of charge.](#)
2. **Program** that number into your radio. The Distress Alert function won't work without it.
3. **Connect** your GPS to the radio. This assures that correct time and position information will be transmitted when you initiate a digital call. It makes search and rescue more effective and that benefits everybody!