

The Importance of Marine VHF Radio when Kayaking

The exciting sport/hobby of Sea Kayaking has become very popular over recent years. Canoeists and kayakers are venturing further and further out to sea. If you are thinking about doing this, then as part of your planning for a great adventure, a marine VHF handheld radio is an essential safety consideration that could save your life.

A marine VHF radio is a very important addition to your kit because it allows you to contact other radio users at sea. Should you encounter a problem you can use the emergency channel (16) to call for assistance.



Radios are not just used for emergency situations. You can talk to other seafarers on one of your radios many other channels, or even let larger vessels nearby, know where you are, just in case. You can also listen to routine weather forecasts and navigational warnings broadcast at 4-hourly intervals for all UK coastal areas!

So why shouldn't a Sea Kayaker use a mobile phone offshore? In the first place many kayakers venture a long way from the coast. The rugged coastlines of Cornwall and Scotland for instance, offer many challenges and mobile phone coverage is designed to cover the urban landscape including towns, cities and motorways. It is highly unlikely that there will be good mobile phone coverage away from the shoreline, particularly at sea level or below cliffs. A marine handheld VHF radio will give you great coverage and peace of mind, making it an essential piece of kit in offshore situations.

Mobile phones are not waterproof, so if they come into contact with water they cease to be reliable. They don't have marine frequencies and you can only speak to one person at a time. On the other hand, as it were, when a marine radio transmits a message, all radio users listening within range will hear you! Another important point is that the Coastguard and the RNLI use marine VHF and are not equipped to pinpoint mobile phone transmissions.

ICOM have a number of marine VHF radio models available that all meet or exceed the basic level of JIS-7 waterproofing. This means the radio can endure submersion in one metre of water for 30 minutes. ICOM recommend the new IC-M23 buoyant VHF marine radio for Kayakers because it is small, lightweight and buoyant. If you accidentally drop the radio in the water, 3 strobe lights are activated at the base of the radio. More importantly, the charging contacts which can be affected by salt corrosion are sealed from corrosion.

A user will require a Short-Range VHF licence to operate a VHF marine radio and there are many easy courses held at sea training schools and adult education centres across the country.

So, if you are serious about safety when kayaking, invest in a waterproof marine VHF radio, it could save your life!



*Image supplied by Anglers Afloat, a dedicated kayak fishing website for the UK and Europe:
www.anglersafloat.co.uk*



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