

The Risks of Pyrotechnic Flares: Looking to Modern Technology for Safety at Sea

by Danielle Doyle | Dec 31, 2023

Let's Have A Safer New Year – 2024

In 2023, a Dutch sailor tragically lost his life when a flare he was using to shoot a distress signal exploded in his hand. This event took place on New Year's Day as he was sailing from Curaçao to Tahiti. This [incident](#), along with other recent reports of accidents involving pyrotechnic flares, has prompted many to question their safety. The dangers of using these flares are clear, and calls for modern alternatives are becoming increasingly common.

The Dutch Safety Board launched an investigation into pyrotechnic flares following the death of the Dutch sailor. The board issued an [alert](#) against the use of a specific batch of parachute flares, which were found to be defective. The manufacturer of the flares, LECEA, issued a recall for the batch: Red Rocket Parachute Flare L-35 / L-35A, batch 0525/2021 – 113. The recall is evidence that pyrotechnic flares are not infallible safety measures and require scrutiny and caution when using.



However, the call for advanced technology as an alternative to marine flares is also growing. Electronic flares are one such alternative. Electronic flares are compact and lightweight, making them easy to pack and carry on board. They also offer a longer battery life, brighter visibility, and are reusable, which can make them a more economical choice.

GPS systems are another technological alternative that can help in marine emergencies. GPS allows rescuers to pinpoint the location of a vessel quickly and accurately, reducing the time it takes to reach a vessel in distress. Additionally, electronic safety beacons can be attached to life jackets and automatically alert rescuers in the event of an emergency.

The risks involved in using pyrotechnic flares, as seen in recent accidents, require caution and the consideration of modern technology alternatives. Electronic flares, GPS systems, and safety beacons are all examples of advanced technology that can improve boater safety. As responsible boaters, it is essential to be prepared for every situation and understand the risks associated with marine activities. The USCG and other boating safety organizations recommend that all boaters carry a combination of traditional and technological safety equipment to

ensure maximum safety while on the water. So always be prepared, and stay safe on the water.
Happy boating!

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