

Marine Flare Collection Events: Ensuring Boater Safety and Environmental Protection

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As part of a critical effort to protect both California's boaters and the environment, several counties across the state, along with major ports, have partnered with CalRecycle, California State Parks and the Coastal Commission's California Boating Clean and Green Program to host marine flare collection events this fall. These events are designed to help residents and boaters safely dispose of expired flares, while also educating the public about safer alternatives such as reusable distress signals.

The significance of these events cannot be overstated. Marine flares are a required piece of safety equipment for boaters, mandated by the U.S. Coast Guard to be carried onboard all vessels to signal for help in case of emergencies. However, these flares have a limited shelf life, expiring after 36 to 42 months. Once expired, they become not just a safety hazard but an environmental threat. Expired pyrotechnic marine flares contain toxic chemicals, like perchlorate, which can pose serious health and environmental risks if improperly disposed of. Unfortunately, many boaters lack access to proper flare disposal facilities and may not know the dangers of simply throwing expired flares in the trash or, worse, overboard.

This lack of access to safe disposal options poses a significant challenge, as California recreational vessels generate approximately 174,000 expired marine flares annually. Without proper disposal events, many of these flares could end up in landfills, waterways or other improper locations, polluting the environment and threatening wildlife.

In response to this issue, marine flare collection events are being held in Alameda County, Del Norte County, West Contra Costa County, Marin County, the Ports of Los Angeles and San Diego, and the City of Morro Bay. These collection drives offer boaters and residents in the covered areas the opportunity to safely dispose of expired flares. These events will only accept expired marine flares from recreational boaters, not from commercial vessels or organizations. Proof of residence or berthing location is required, ensuring that only eligible boaters can take part.

The Southern California events will take place at the Port of San Diego on Oct. 26, at 2210 Shelter Island Drive and at the Port of Los Angeles on the same day at Cabrillo Way Marina in San Pedro. A collection event also will be held in Morro Bay on Oct. 27. For Northern California boaters, events will occur in West Contra Costa County, Del Norte County,

Humboldt County, Marin County and Alameda County from October to early November. Boaters in Alameda County can dispose of flares by appointment only via the stopwaste.org website.

In addition to the importance of proper flare disposal, boaters are encouraged to explore safer and more sustainable alternatives to traditional flares. Electronic visual distress signal devices (eVDSD) are a reusable option that can effectively replace single-use flares. These devices are non-toxic and last much longer, reducing the need for frequent replacement and eliminating the risk of environmental contamination.

Ultimately, these collection events serve a dual purpose: keeping boaters compliant with safety regulations and reducing the environmental impact of hazardous waste. By participating in the collections, boaters not only protect themselves but also contribute to the preservation of California's beautiful coastal waters.

For more information about these events or to learn more about expired marine flare disposal and alternative distress signal options, visit dbw.parks.ca.gov/marineflares.

Upcoming Collection Events:

Southern California

- **Port of San Diego** – Oct. 26, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at 2210 Shelter Island Drive, San Diego
- **Port of Los Angeles** – Oct. 26, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Cabrillo Way Marina, 2293 Miner St., San Pedro
- **City of Morro Bay** – Oct. 27, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at 1196 Front St.

Northern California

- **West Contra Costa County** – Oct. 16 – Nov. 2, Wednesday – Saturday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., 101 Pittsburg Ave., Richmond
- **Del Norte County and Humboldt County** – Nov. 2, 10 AM to 2 PM at 1700 State St., Crescent City
- **Marin County** – Nov. 3, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Clipper Yacht Harbor, 310 Harbor Drive, Sausalito
- **Alameda County** – Nov. 3, by appointment only. Sign up at www.stopwaste.org/marineflares

Participating in these events is a simple yet impactful way for boaters to ensure their vessels remain safe and their old flares don't harm the environment.