

Sirius Signal to Receive the Green Arrow Award from the California Product Stewardship Council

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Sirius Signal's hard work and dedication to produce products that are more environmentally friendly than the standard pyrotechnic flare are being recognized this month by the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC). On August 17, 2020, Sirius Signal will be receiving one of four awards given by that organization. They will be awarded the Green Arrow Award from the CPSC, which specifically recognizes a company's "innovative product, package or system-approach that removes or reduces toxic or other problematic attributes present in other similar products."

To understand the importance of this award we can take a quick look at why Sirius Signal's product is being recognized...

The problem – For years the pyrotechnic flare has been the only standard daytime and

nighttime visual distress signal mechanism used by many boaters all across the United States and around the world. In the United States, the safety equipment requirements for boaters are set by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Some of the specific dangers linked to the pyrotechnic flare include: Pyrotechnic flares burn at temperatures exceeding 2500 degrees Fahrenheit making them very dangerous to handle if you are not properly trained; **Expired pyrotechnic flares are classified as explosive hazardous waste by the USCG**, hence disposal of these flares is not easy or in any way convenient; Some boaters will not take the extra time to properly dispose of these expired flares, sometimes resorting to illegally throwing them in a regular garbage can or worse, throwing them overboard into the ocean or lakes; According to the Pinellas County, FL, site, “Flares contain toxic and reactive materials, including [but not limited to] fuel oil, magnesium, and potassium chlorate.” In fact, most flares are made with many of the same chemicals that fireworks are made of, many of which are harmful to the environment or pose a threat to human health.

Quick Note: “The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) classifies pyrotechnic flares that will no longer be used for their intended purpose as hazardous waste, as they are toxic, reactive, and ignitable (as defined by hazardous waste regulations). Pyrotechnic flares are a safety hazard due to their combustible and reactive nature. Common ingredients in various types of flares include strontium nitrate, potassium perchlorate, strontium peroxide, magnesium, and black powder (a mixture of sulfur, charcoal, and potassium nitrate).” coastal.ca.gov site document 2017

Due to their classification as explosive hazardous waste, the USCG strongly recommends that expired pyrotechnic flares be brought to approved disposal sites. ” However, the lack of locations for proper disposal of expired marine flares is a problem in California... Currently, only two counties (Alameda and Santa Cruz) accept expired marine flares at their HHW collection facilities” (coastal.ca.gov site document 2017). What does this mean for California’s natural environment? Well, **this translates to hundreds of thousands of improperly disposed of toxic and explosive expired flares every year all across the state.** Imagine what this means on a national level...



USCG approved alternative to pyrotechnic flares

The solution – Since 2014 Sirius Signal has been working on environmentally and family-friendly alternatives to the hazardous flares. They currently sell two USCG approved legal pyrotechnic flare replacements. Both of these e-flares are family-friendly, meaning that no special training or equipment is needed to engage the lights. Children and adults of any responsible age can easily turn the lights on and hold them in the case of an emergency without the threat of harm from the lights.

Quick Note: “The Sirius Signal SOS Distress Light is a Coast Guard approved LED alternative to pyrotechnic flares.” California Coastal Commission Document 2017

But, the CPSC is recognizing Sirius Signal specifically for the environmental impact of their products. Sirius Signal’s electronic LED flares NEVER expire, they are battery-operated. Given that there are plenty of battery recycling programs, the environmental impact of their electronic flares is relatively minimal. As awareness of these products increases and boaters are replacing pyrotechnics with these e-flares in their boating safety kits, the improper disposal of toxic and explosive pyrotechnic flares is reduced.

What this means for boaters and the environment, in general, is that boaters will no longer have to worry about possibly breaking a law by improperly disposing of their expired flares. They will no longer have to search for a facility specifically capable of disposing of their explosive hazardous waste. Boaters will be free to enjoy their boats and be secure in the knowledge that their electronic flare is safe to use and a much better option for nature all around.

Meanwhile, **the environmental impact over time will be substantial and lasting** (this is a great thing!). Thousands of expired flares will no longer be illegally disposed of into garbage cans or bodies of water. Tons of toxic materials will no longer be a threat to our environment and to human health.

So, these reasons may have been among the ones the CPSC considered when choosing Sirius Signal as the recipient for their Green Arrow Award. What Sirius Signal has done for our environment and for boaters in California and all around the United States may not be quantifiable, but the fruits of their labor have, without a doubt, **reduced the dangers of toxins and hazardous materials reaching landfills, oceans, waterways, and a myriad of living things everywhere.**