

# Coastal Counties Across California Collect Over 8,500 Single-Use Marine Flares

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For several years, the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC) has partnered with local jurisdictions, California State Parks and Coastal Commission's California Boating Clean and Green Program, and CalRecycle to collect expired marine flares from coastal locations across the State. Beyond collection, the partners seek to educate residents about the safe management of marine flares and the advantages of switching to reusable electronic distress signals. These collective efforts aim to protect California communities and the local environment. In 2024, expired marine flares were collected from the following jurisdictions:

- Orange County
- Port of San Diego
- Port of Los Angeles
- City of Morro Bay
- West Contra Costa County
- Marin County
- Alameda County
- Del Norte County

Residents and boaters berthing their boats in the Port of Los Angeles, the Port of San Diego, the City of Morro Bay, Orange County, Marin County, Alameda County, West Contra Costa County, and Del Norte County took their expired marine flares to their jurisdiction's designated marine flare collection events in September 2023. Combined, the events collected over 8,596 individual flares from over 525 participants across California.

Additionally, over 250 reusable electronic visual distress signal devices (eVDSDs) were distributed to boaters to help them make the switch from single-use marine flares to reusables!

The partners extend their thanks to the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Partner Dockwalkers (US Coast Guard Auxiliary and LA Conservation Corps) for their invaluable support during the events. They also express gratitude to the local harbors, marinas, yacht clubs, and boatyards for hosting the events and helping to spread the word. These events would not be possible without the support and collaboration of these local organizations.

In the absence of safe disposal options locally, the partners encourage resident boaters to consider reusable eVDSDs as an alternative to the single-use pyrotechnic marine flare. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) requires vessels operating on coastal waters, the Great Lakes, territorial seas, and waters directly connected to them (up to the point where the body of water is less than two miles wide) to carry on board Coast Guard several approved unexpired visual distress signals, such as pyrotechnic flares. Learn more about flares and their requirements here.

Pyrotechnic marine flares are a common type of distress signal, but they are explosive hazardous waste and contain toxic chemicals that pose human health risks. Marine flares are only a one-time use item and expire 36 to 42 months after the manufacture date. For safety and environmental reasons, it is essential to manage single-use pyrotechnic marine flares carefully. Residents should never throw flares overboard into the environment or out in household trash. However, California resident boaters do not have access to an ongoing expired marine flare disposal program. Recreational vessels generate about 174,000 pyrotechnic marine flares every year, according to 2011 estimations from the California Expired Marine Flare Working Group. The coalition behind these events urge residents to stay alert for future temporary collection events and consider switching to reusable eVDSD.

*For more information, visit [www.CalPSC.org](http://www.CalPSC.org).*