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**CIVIL AIR PATROL NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

*Citizens Serving Communities: Above and Beyond*

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## **Civil Air Patrol urges responsible disposal of old emergency beacons**

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – Boat and plane owners upgrading their emergency beacons to the newer technology may be tempted to toss their old ones in the nearest dumpster. But emergency beacons, also known as ELTs in aircraft and EPIRBs in watercraft, were not meant to be discarded like common trash.

Civil Air Patrol, in partnership with the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, has kicked off a communications initiative – a “Don’t Trash the Beacon” campaign – to inform boaters and airplane owners about proper disposal of obsolete emergency beacons. CAP squadrons across the nation are supporting this initiative by displaying posters about proper disposal in their communities.

When discarding the older 121.5/243 MHz analog frequency emergency locator beacons in favor of the stronger, more reliable 406 MHz frequency digital emergency beacons, it is important to first remove or disconnect the battery from the device so it cannot be accidentally activated. Then, contact a local electronics waste facility for proper disposal.

If not disposed of with care, the 121.5/243 MHz emergency locator could accidentally broadcast a distress signal. Since it is impossible to determine which signals are false alarms and which are true emergencies, emergency responders must track down all signals and silence them, tying up valuable resources needed for actual emergencies.

Switching to the new beacon is important, because the international search and rescue satellite system COSPAS-SARSAT now only processes signals from the 406 MHz frequency digital emergency locator transmitters. Though the older signals can still be heard by ground-based detection equipment and aircraft in flight, it requires more time and labor to find them without the aid of the satellite.

“It is time consuming for our members to locate and silence ELTs in landfills and dumpsters, but it is something that must be done to make sure all emergency signals are accounted for,” said CAP National Commander Maj. Gen. Amy S. Courter. “With a little care, our community aviators and boaters can ensure false alarms are kept to a minimum.

“Even as we encourage everyone to continue to embrace the new beacon technology, CAP members will still vigilantly monitor the old frequencies to ensure no emergency falls through the cracks,” Courter said.

Other tips for maximizing emergency response team resources include:

- Checking 121.5/243 on your radio before shutting down your aircraft to be sure your ELT is not sounding. If it is, reset it to avoid false alarms.
- Periodically check or continually monitor the 121.5/243 frequency while flying for any emergency tones emanating from an older beacon. Notify Air Traffic Control immediately if this occurs. Hearing and reporting an emergency beacon could save a life.

For more information on the emergency beacon transition, visit:

- [AFRCC 121.5/243 Phaseout Fact Sheet](#)
- [AFRCC Preventing False Alarms Fact Sheet](#)
- [Emergency Beacon Overview](#)
- [NOAA SAR Satellite Overview](#)
- [NOAA Phaseout Summary](#)

Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with 56,000 members nationwide. CAP performs 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and was credited by the Air Force with saving 91 lives in fiscal year 2008. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counter-drug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the nearly 22,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for more than 67 years. For more information on CAP, visit [gocivilairpatrol.com](http://gocivilairpatrol.com).