Transport Canada Transports Canada

TP 2228
(03/2004)

TAKE FIVE...

for safety
Five minutes reading could save your life !

Let's Stop UNSARs!!!

Canada's search and rescue (SAR) crews are amongst the finest in the world. Together, they save hundreds of lives each year in the difficult and demanding role of rescuer.

An "UNSAR" is an unnecessary search and rescue alert. When our rescuers respond to UNSARs from emergency locator transmitters (ELT), personal locator beacons (PLB), and emergency position-indicating radio beacons (EPIRB), there is a cost to Canadian taxpayers; however, more importantly, rescue crews are diverted away from real emergencies while endangering their own lives when responding to false alarms in difficult weather conditions. Fortunately, most of these false alarms can be avoided. Owners are strongly encouraged to ensure their device is in good working condition and proper maintenance is carried out to avoid inadvertent transmission. Your emergency beacon should be readily available and functioning properly when you really need it—during an actual emergency! Some examples of UNSARs include:

- Over 18 hours spent by CASARA and Industry Canada inspectors locating an Aeronca parked in a hangar. The ELT had been accidentally activated.
- 6.8 hours spent by a Canadian Forces Hercules aircraft in locating a helicopter whose ELT was activated during maintenance.
- 4.2 hours of Canadian Forces time to locate an ELT in a courier truck. The ELT had been shipped for maintenance armed and with the batteries in place.

To put the wasted resources into perspective, approximate total operating costs for various military SAR aircraft run anywhere from $3,000 to $5,000 per hour and per aircraft type…no chump change by anyone's standards. Of course, this does not include all the smaller CASARA aircraft.

You can help minimize this number and amount of time spent dealing with those incidents by:

- Making sure the ELT is part of your pre-flight check:
  - Secure, free of corrosion and antenna connections are secure
  - Armed
  - Batteries are current
  - Listen on 121.5 to ensure the ELT isn't transmitting
- After landing—as part of your post-flight routine:
  - Listen on 121.5 to make sure you did not set off the ELT with that bounce on landing.
  - Turn your ELT function switch to "OFF" if practical.

If your ELT does go off accidentally, let an air traffic service (ATS) unit or JRCC know, advising them of the ELT location and how long it was activated. This may prevent the unnecessary launch of search aircraft. Just turning your ELT off without telling anyone will leave SAR officials in doubt about the incident and whether or not the search should continue.

Any testing of an ELT must only be conducted during the first 5 minutes of any UTC hour and restricted in duration to not more than 5 seconds. When shipping your ELT for maintenance, turn the ELT function switch to "OFF" and remove the batteries, if possible. Finally, take a few more minutes to review the *A.I.P. Canada SAR* 3.0—Emergency Locator Transmitter.

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