Locating Distress Beacons

Using Portable Aviation-Band Multi-Channel AM VHF Radio

Tune the radio to 121.5 MHz if a beacon signal is heard.

Then tune the radio to 121.45 or 121.55 MHz – if the beacon signal is still heard, you are within approximately 100 metres of the beacon.

Look for a likely source of the signal and move towards the area. If you progressively tune the radio away from 121.5 MHz (to 121.40, 121.35 and further) and you continue to receive the beacon signal, you are getting close to the beacon.

When you are within one metre of the beacon, the beacon signal will break through on all frequencies. If it is possible, remove the antennae from your radio, and if you can still hear the signal, you are extremely close.

Using Small Hand-held FM or AM Radio Receiver

An FM radio tuned to 99.5 MHz will pick up an emergency beacon signal from approximately one kilometre away, and the technique described above can be used.

An AM radio will pick up an emergency beacon signal less than three metres away on any frequency, and can be used to check individual aircraft.

An emergency beacon radiating inside a closed hangar or storage container may not transmit omni-directionally. In this case, once on the bearing line, follow it through, occasionally deviating to verify that the direction is correct. There is also the possibility that an emergency beacon radiating inside a closed hangar or storage container may be shielded altogether from a receiver outside the hangar.