



14 May 2009

### **False alarm Beacon Search**

The Ambulance Service of NSW spent several hours yesterday searching for an outdated analogue 121.5 beacon in Cobar that turned out to be a false alarm.

As all beacon activations are treated as distress situations the Orange based Ambulance Helicopter comprising an Ambulance paramedic, doctor, aircrewman and pilot were dispatched to the beacon after being tasked by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

The mission took the Ambulance crew 6 hours to complete with the beacon eventually located in a local tip. It is believed the beacon was unintentionally activated when it was discarded. The beacon was an outdated 121.5 analogue model, which is no longer detected by satellite but is still detected by over flying aircraft. It was likely discarded by an owner who didn't realise that it was still active and could be detected.

The Ambulance Service and AMSA strongly encourage all holders of outdated analogue distress beacons to dispose of them appropriately so they don't accidentally activate and trigger a false alarm and the inappropriate use of emergency services resources.

The latest model of EPIRBs (406 MHz distress beacons) is recommended which provide a more accurate positioning of patient location so that a helicopter can be dispatched accurately without requiring an extensive search in a general area.

During the six hour period, Road Paramedics in Orange responded to any medical emergencies in the area and were backed up by a Sydney based helicopter if required.

Distress Beacons are used by the aviation and maritime industries and bushwalkers. The Ambulance Service of NSW has assisted in locating a number of persons in remote and inaccessible locations over the years who have activated a distress beacon and subsequently reduced the complexity, time and effort of their rescue.

Appropriate disposal of beacons can be done free of charge at any Battery World outlet or you can contact your local Maritime authority for further information.

Further information about disposal of Beacons is available from the Australian Maritime and Safety Authority or [www.amsa.gov.au/beacons](http://www.amsa.gov.au/beacons)