

NOAA Nautical Charting Calendar

Fog Signals^{1,2}

Fog signals are audible aids used to warn of danger, and to help mariners determine their position when visibility is limited by fog, snow, rain, smoke, or thick weather. Diaphones[†], horns, sirens, whistles, bells, and gongs are used as fog signals.

Fog signals are charted as a symbol with labels and notes. In most cases, fog signals are located on fixed or floating aids to navigation. In such cases, their designation is part of the light or buoy characteristics, and information on the fog signal is included in the ATON label. In other cases, fog signals are included on structures not normally used for navigation. In this case a landmark symbol is used and the appropriate label appended.

Mariners should not rely on sound signals to determine their position. Distance cannot be accurately determined by sound intensity. Signals may not sound where fog exists close to, but not at, the signal. Further, it is not always possible to start a fog signal immediately when fog is observed.

[†]The classic two-tone foghorn is a **diaphone** that produces an upper tone followed by a full steady low tone of equal or greater duration.

Examples of Fog Signal Descriptions

20	 FI 3s 70m 29M SIREN Mo(N) 60s	Siren at a lighthouse, giving a long blast followed by a short one (N), repeated every 60 seconds
21	 BELL	Wave-actuated bell buoy
22	 Q(6)+LFI 15s HORN(1) 15s WHIS	Light buoy, with horn giving a single blast every 15 seconds, in conjunction with a wave-actuated whistle

The U.S. Coast Guard maintains an estimated 1420 fog signals. Fog signals on fixed stations and large buoys produce a specific number of blasts and silent periods to facilitate identification. Fog signals on buoys are activated by the motion of the sea and do not emit regular signal characteristics. When the sea is calm they may emit no sound signals. The sound from a fog signal may not be sufficiently loud to be heard over the noise of an engine. Periodically reduce the engine to idle power, or turn it off to listen for these signals.

		<h2>June 2006</h2>						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY		
¹ Text adapted from "Nautical Chart Users Manual," which is available for free at http://chartmaker.ned.noaa.gov/staff/ncum/ncum.htm . ² Diagram adapted from Chart 1, "Nautical Chart Symbols, Abbreviations and Terms" which is available for free at http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/chartno1.htm .				1	2	3		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
25	26	27	28	29	30			