

PRESS RELEASE

Sen. Blakespear Introduces Legislation To Safely Collect And Dispose Expired Marine Flares

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SACRAMENTO – Sen. Catherine Blakespear, D-Encinitas, has introduced legislation to require manufacturers of marine flares to establish and run a program to collect and dispose of expired flares, which are toxic and explosive.

Marine flares are a popular way for boaters to meet U.S. Coast Guard requirements for carrying approved, unexpired visual distress signals in case of emergency while in coastal waters. The flares are appealing because they are brighter in the day than alternatives, such as electronic beacons.

Marine flares expire 42 months after manufacture, and each year in California, approximately 174,000 flares expire. However, there are no facilities in California that have the necessary permit to treat or dispose of these flares.

This leaves boaters with few options. As a result, some boaters stockpile their expired flares, creating a fire hazard, or dispose of them in the ocean, polluting the water with toxins.

“Expired marine flares sound harmless but can be quite dangerous and damaging to the environment,” Sen. Blakespear said. “SB 561 ensures manufacturers take responsibility for the waste created by their expired products and create a program to safely collect and dispose of them.”

Local governments report finding flares left in front of fire and police stations or improperly disposed of in the trash. This puts public safety workers at great risk, because an expired marine flare can accidentally **explode** while being handled.

SB 561 requires manufacturers to create a manufacturer responsibility plan for the collection, transportation and safe disposal of expired flares. The plan must involve a free and convenient collection program with temporary collection sites in coastal counties, as well as an education and outreach program, including prominently displayed and easily visible signs at point of sale and in marinas.

This is in line with other Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs established by the state designed to ensure manufacturers cover the end-of-life costs for their products.

The legislation, titled the Emergency Distress Flare Safe Disposal Act, is co-sponsored by the National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC) and Zero Waste Sonoma.

“Senator Blakespear and her staff have been working diligently with the state and other stakeholders to create a more comprehensive program and mechanisms for the Department of Toxic Substances Control to recoup their costs to enforce the legislation,” said Heidi Sanborn, NSAC’s Executive Director. “It’s time for the manufacturer to stop fighting and help their frustrated customers by providing safe disposal options for their product.”

“We need to work together to reduce the costs to manage explosives like marine flares and make it much more convenient to consumers to do the right thing,” said Leslie Lukacs, Executive Director of Zero Waste Sonoma. “We want to provide our residents with a solution when they are trying to dispose of flares correctly.”

Sen. Blakespear represents Senate District 38. Her constituents live in northern San Diego County and southern Orange County. To learn more about the district and Sen. Blakespear, visit her [Senate website](#).