Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

How many symbols does the survivors' ground-air code have?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Five single symbols: V, X, N, Y and one arrow.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.1; Annex 12, Appendix 2.1, No. 1; Annex 12, Appendix 2.1, No. 2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Which survivors' symbol means require assistance?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

V: two strokes meeting at a point at the bottom.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.1, No. 1

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Which survivors' symbol means require medical assistance?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

X: two crossing diagonal strokes.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.1, No. 2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does the survivors' symbol N mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

No, or negative.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.1, No. 3

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does the survivors' symbol Y mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Yes, or affirmative.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.1, No. 4

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does a single arrow on the ground mean for survivors?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Proceeding in this direction. The arrowhead points the way the survivors are going.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.1, No. 5

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does the rescue units' symbol LLL mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Operation completed. It is three capital Ls side by side.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 1

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does LL with a straight line under both Ls mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

We have found all personnel.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does a horizontal line crossed by two short vertical strokes mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

We have found only some personnel.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 3

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does the rescue units' symbol XX mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

We are not able to continue. Returning to base.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 4

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does a horizontal line with two diagonal arrows mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Divided into two groups. Each group proceeds in the direction indicated.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 5

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What do two arrows, one behind the other and pointing the same way, mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Information received that the aircraft is in this direction.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 6

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does the rescue units' symbol NN mean?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Nothing found. Will continue to search.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 7

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Do survivors use single or doubled symbols?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Survivors use single symbols. Rescue units use doubled or tripled symbols.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.1 and 2.2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Is XX a stronger form of X?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

No. XX is a rescue-unit symbol meaning not able to continue, returning to base. A single X asks for medical help.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.1, No. 2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 4; Annex 12, Appendix 2.1 and 2.2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Do LLL and LL mean the same thing?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

No. LLL means operation completed. LL with a line under both Ls means all personnel found.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 1; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What is the minimum length of a ground-air symbol?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

2.5 m (8 ft), and made as conspicuous as possible.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.3

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Which three manoeuvres make up the follow me signal to a surface craft?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

First, circle the surface craft at least once. Then cross its projected course close ahead at low altitude. Finally, fly off on the heading to follow.

Annex 12, Appendix 1.1

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

How often does the aircraft circle a surface craft in the follow me signal?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

At least once.

Annex 12, Appendix 1.1(a); Annex 12, Appendix 1.1

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

How can a surface craft say it understood a follow me signal?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

It can hoist the code pennant close up, flash a succession of the letter T in Morse code, or change heading to follow the aircraft.

Annex 12, Appendix 1.2, Note

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

How can a surface craft say it cannot comply?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

It can hoist the international flag N, or flash a succession of the letter N in Morse code.

Annex 12, Appendix 1.2, Note

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Which signal tells a surface craft that its help is no longer required?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Cross its wake close astern at low altitude. Do not circle or head off.

Annex 12, Appendix 1.1 and 1.2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Where does the aircraft cross a surface craft for follow me, and where for no longer required?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Follow me: close ahead of the projected course. No longer required: close astern, across the wake.

Annex 12, Appendix 1.1 and 1.2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What is a projected course?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

The track a surface craft follows if it holds its present heading.

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

How does an aircraft show by day that it understood a ground signal?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

It rocks its wings.

Annex 12, Appendix 3.1(a)

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

How does an aircraft show by night that it understood a ground signal?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

It flashes its landing lights on and off twice. With no landing lights, it switches its navigation lights on and off twice.

Annex 12, Appendix 3.1(b)

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

What does it mean when an aircraft makes no such signal?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

The ground signal has not been understood. No separate not-understood signal exists.

Annex 12, Appendix 3.2

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Does repeated switching of the landing lights answer a ground signal?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

No. Two flashes answer a ground signal. Repeated switching is the urgency signal for an aircraft with difficulties.

Annex 12, Appendix 3.1(b); SERA Appendix 1, 1.3.1(a); Annex 12, Appendix 3.1(b)

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Does rocking the wings always mean ground signal understood?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

No. Context decides. It can also be a surface-craft signal, an aerodrome-light acknowledgement or part of interception.

Annex 12, Appendix 1.1, 1.2, 3.1(a); SERA Appendix 1, 3.1.2(a); SERA.11015, Table S11-1 Series 1

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

Portugal national addition: which survivors' symbol is added?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

SOS. AIP Portugal says: in doubt, use the International symbol SOS. The Annex 12 code is the code to learn for the exam.

AIP Portugal GEN 3.6, 6.3 (AIRAC 001-26)

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

From which date does the Annex 12 appendix publish the visual signals?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

From 26 November 2026. Until 25 November 2026, the IAMSAR Manual publishes them in Volume III only.

Annex 12, 5.6.5, Notes

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

QUESTION

How many symbols does the rescue units' code have?

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Search and rescue signals
010 Air Law and ATC Procedures › 10 Search and rescue

ANSWER

Seven, all doubled or tripled forms.

Annex 12, Appendix 2.2; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 1; Annex 12, Appendix 2.2, No. 2

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