

GUARDA FRONTERA – The Cuban Coast Guard

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Coast guard and other government and private sector emergency services in Cuba are not equal to those found in the US. Cruisers planning a trip to Cuba should prepare accordingly, remain alert and safe underway, and stay vigilant during their visit.

The Guarda Frontera (Cuban Coast Guard) is a branch of the Cuban Military. Although there was a desire to help us, we encountered resistance and road blocks while attempting to research, visit and interview officials directly. Interviewees requested that we refrain from publishing their names.



Morro Signal Station – Guarda Frontera

We also interviewed two captains who had encountered marine emergencies. Their information is based on actual experience. Some of the information provided by one individual was different or even contradicted that provided by another. We present information as received and recommend that cruisers be prepared for emergencies and perform due diligence before departing the US.

Process and information for a vessel encountering an emergency at sea in Cuban waters:

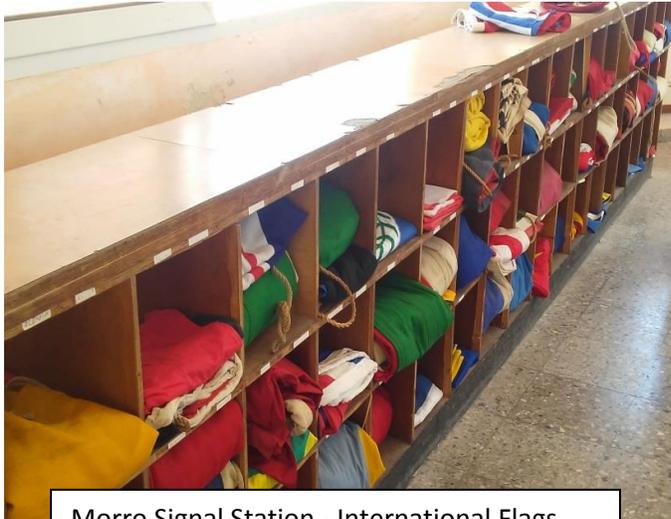
- Guarda Frontera is the Cuban equivalent to the United States Coast Guard.
- In the event of an emergency first call Guarda Frontera on VHF Channel 16.
- You can also dial 107 on your cell phone to report a marine emergency.
- Guarda Frontera, Harbor Masters and Dock Masters also monitor VHF Channel 77. Continue efforts to report any emergency until you reach the proper authorities.
- We were told but unable to confirm that Guarda Frontera also monitors the same SSB frequencies as the United States Coast Guard. We did not see SSB radio equipment at the locations we visited.
- There are Guarda Frontera locations at each of the Ports of Entry listed below:
 1. Marina Hemingway
 2. Marina Gaviota Los Morros
 3. Marina Marlin Cayo Largo
 4. Marina Marlin Cienfuegos
 5. Marina Marlin Punta Gorda
 6. Marina Gaviota la Vita
 7. Marina Cayo Guillermo



Morro Signal Station - Radio Desk

8. Marina Gaviota Varadero
9. Marina Darsena Varadero

- Handheld radios may be the only communications equipment available at some Guarda Frontera locations. This can make it difficult or even impossible for officials there to intercept or receive calls for help. We interviewed individuals who reportedly received no answer after hailing Guarda Frontera repeatedly on VHF Channel 16.



Morro Signal Station - International Flags

- Most Guarda Frontera personnel do not speak English. If Guarda Frontera, Harbor Master, Dock Master or a signal station operator hears a “Mayday” transmitted in English, they will do their best to have an English-speaking person assist the caller. We interviewed cruisers who experienced challenges reporting emergencies and communicating with Guarda Frontera personnel.
- If you hail Guarda Frontera on VHF Channel 16 and receive no response, hail the Harbor Master and/or Dock Master closest marina to your location.

- Radio operators at the Morro Signal Station near Havana handle marine traffic coming in to the Port of Havana. They also monitor VHF Channel 16. Their VHF radios can intercept calls for a radius of approximately 15 miles. If they intercept your emergency transmission they will dispatch the call to the closest Guarda Frontera location that can render assistance.
- The Morro Signal Station has radio operators on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Equipment available at the Morro Signal Station includes VHF equipment, Morse code signal light with long distance capability and a telescope.
- Guarda Frontera maintains an inventory of water-borne assets at various locations capable of assisting rescues. We were unable to confirm specific inventory but were told they have access to vessels of different sizes (e.g. for commercial versus private vessels, helicopters, etc).
- Helicopters can fly from emergency scenes and land at the hospital. The experience and quality of helicopter teams and the availability of life saving equipment and medicines are unknown.
- Guarda Frontera has divers and personnel trained to perform man overboard search and rescue.



Morro Signal Station - Morse Code Signal Light

- We were unable to verify charges for services performed by Guarda Frontera. Persons we interviewed had either no knowledge of or permission to divulge this information.
- We were told that Cuban Government and the United States Coast Guard are reviewing arrangements to permit USCG vessels to enter into Cuban waters rescues. The status of this information remains unconfirmed as of April 15, 2017. USCG currently performs rescues outside Cuban waters that extend 12 miles offshore.



Morro Signal Station - Telescope

- Gee Gee Morgan Beatty, a U.S. citizen, has purchased the rights to become the sole Sea Tow provider in Cuba. When the U.S. eases restrictions on business activity with Cuba, Sea Tow will open locations at various ports throughout the country. Updates and further information is available at: <https://www.seatow.com>.

For a vessel encountering an emergency while located in a Cuban marina:

- In the event of a medical emergency, hail the Dock Master at your marina on VHF Channel 16. The Dock Master will arrange for medical services or an ambulance or taxi depending on the state of the emergency.
- In the event of fire, hail the Dock Master on VHF Channel 16. The Dock Master will contact local fire authorities.

Salvaging a vessel in Cuban waters or if washed ashore on Cuban borders:

- There is presently only one company that performs or arranges salvage in Cuba. The process, timeline and cost for salvage services will vary based on emergency.
 Antillana De Salvamento
 Captain Rolando Diaz Chamizo
 +53 5-280-8039 Mobile phone
 +53 7-766-7592 Landline answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
 SSB monitored on 8.110 MHz