


# Ground to Air Emergency Code

You get into trouble in the middle of nowhere, set off your distress beacon and wait for the aircraft to arrive. What then? There is a set of internationally recognized distress signals known as the Ground-Air Visual Signal Code that can be used to convey simple messages to an over flying search aircraft where there is no other means of communication. However, there has been some confusion lately as to which signals are correct. The confusion has come about since some of the signals were either changed or withdrawn in 1986, the most significant being the changing of the X signal to mean 'require medical assistance'. The authoritative publication in Australia on this issue is the National Search and Rescue Manual and the relevant table is shown below.

**Table 1: Ground - air visual signal code for use by survivors**

Number	Message	Code Symbol
1	Require Assistance	V
2	Require Medical Assistance	X
3	Proceeding in this Direction	
4	Yes or Affirmative	Y
5	No or Negative	N

Note: If in doubt use International symbol - SOS

Basically, these symbols can be made on the ground by using rocks or other material or using ready-made V-Sheets etc. You must ensure that the symbols are large enough to be seen by an aircraft flying overhead. The pilot will respond if the signal is understood by rocking the aircraft's wings during daylight or flashing the aircraft's landing lights or navigation lights ON and OFF.

These signals are worthwhile remembering to indicate to a search aircraft that your party is in distress or, if the search aircraft cannot land close by, giving the pilot more information about the situation for relaying to a ground party or more suitable rescue aircraft that is making its way towards you.

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