



Marine notice 06/2020
Supersedes 14/2015

Reducing the risk of collisions at sea

Purpose

To remind vessel owners, operators, masters, skippers, watchkeepers, and other personnel involved in the navigation of vessels, of the importance of adhering to the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 (known as the Collision Regulations or COLREGs¹); as amended.

Application of COLREGs

In Australia, the COLREGs are implemented through Commonwealth, state and territory laws.

COLREGs apply to all vessels, regardless of their size or nature of operation, in all navigable waters, from inland waters to the high seas.

Contravention of COLREGs may jeopardise the safety of life and endanger the environment. Under the *Navigation Act 2012*, it is an offence for an owner or a master to operate a vessel, if it contravenes the COLREGs (implemented by *Marine Order 30 (Prevention of collisions) 2016*²).

General responsibility

Vessel owners, operators and masters are responsible for ensuring that personnel involved in the navigation of vessels have an in depth knowledge of navigational practices and a full understanding of the COLREGs.

Incident history

Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB)³ investigations into 41 collisions over 26 years identified failure to maintain a proper lookout and to take early avoiding action as common contributing factors to collisions.

Maintaining a proper lookout

Maintaining a proper lookout is a vital element of good watchkeeping practice, particularly when visibility is restricted.

A proper lookout by sight and hearing should involve the use of all available means, to detect the presence of other vessels.

AMSA considers the following as ways to keep a proper lookout:

- regular visual scans of the entire horizon (360 degrees),
- effective use of the vessel's radar,
- use of Automatic Identification System (AIS) to:
 - locate targets in the area, and
 - transmit accurate data
- a quiet wheelhouse to allow for:
 - VHF radio calls to be heard,
 - sound signals to be heard, and
- all other available means to maintain good situational awareness.

Watchkeepers need to be aware that any distraction from their duties can have a negative impact on safety. Managing fatigue

¹ A copy of the COLREGs can be obtained from various websites or specialist marine bookshops.

² Sections 177 and 178 of the *Navigation Act 2012* are offence provisions

³ Australian Transport Safety Bureau - http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation_reports/2014/mair/311-mo-2014-006/

is a recognised way of minimising distraction.

Visibility of small vessels

Small vessels and vessels constructed of fibreglass, carbon fibre, and/or wood, are not easily detectable by radar. Operators of these vessels should never assume approaching vessels have detected them by radar.

Operators of not easily detected vessels are encouraged to ensure their vessels can be easily detected by:

- transmitting AIS data,
- installing radar reflectors, and
- displaying navigation lights that are brighter than the minimum requirements.

Vessels less than 20 metres, sailing vessels and vessels engaged in fishing

A person navigating these vessels should observe the practices of good seamanship and in particular:

- avoid erratic and unpredictable manoeuvres when in the vicinity of larger vessels,
- avoid anchoring in and around busy sea lanes, particularly at night,
- avoid the use of lights that can interfere with and restrict the identification of navigation lights, and
- ensure the vessel's AIS is transmitting accurate information.

The master and crew of such vessels must be familiar with Rule 9 (Narrow Channels) and Rule 10 (Traffic Separation Schemes) of the COLREGs, including obligations to not impede the passage of other vessels when navigating in or near narrow channels, fairways, and traffic separation schemes.

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