



Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Navigation in the Dover Strait

Note to Shipowners, Masters and all concerned with the Navigation of Seagoing Vessels

This note supersedes MGN 29 (M + F)

Summary

This notice draws attention to mariners on the new mandatory reporting regime and the problems associated with navigating through and across the Dover Strait

Introduction

1. The Dover Strait and its approaches are among the busiest shipping lanes in the world and pose serious problems for the safety of navigation. The traffic separation scheme, its associated inshore traffic zones, the Channel Navigation Information Service (CNIS) and the mandatory reporting system (referred to as CALDOVREP) have been designed to assist seafarers to navigate these waters in safety. There is therefore a need for careful navigation in this area in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 (as amended) and for use to be made of the CNIS and the CALDOVREP scheme. MGN 28 contains guidance on the observance of traffic separation schemes in general. Details of the CALDOVREP scheme and CNIS are contained in the Admiralty List of Radio Signals Vol. 6 Part 1 and the Mariner's Routeing Guide for the English Channel and Southern North Sea (BA Chart No.5500). The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea are to be found in Merchant Shipping Notice No. M1642/COLREG 1.

2. The number of collisions in the Dover Strait and its approaches has declined since the introduction of the traffic separation scheme and its mandatory application for all ships in 1977. Nevertheless the risk of collision is ever present and heightened if vessels do not comply with the requirements of the scheme, and Rule 10 in particular.

3. MANDATORY REPORTING SYSTEM

On 1 July 1999, a mandatory reporting system CALDOVREP was introduced, which replaced the existing system MAREP/POSREP.

All vessels over 300gt must report as follows:

(i) NE-bound traffic to Gris Nez Traffic via VHF Ch 13 when abeam the Bassurelle lightbuoy (50°33'N;000°58'E).

(ii) SW-bound traffic to Dover Coastguard via VHF Ch 11 not later than crossing a line drawn from North Foreland Light (51°23'N;001°27'E) to the Belgian and French borders (51°05'N;002°33'E).

(iii) Vessels which are not under command, anchored in the traffic separation scheme, restricted in their ability to manoeuvre or with defective nav aids are also required to report.

Inshore Traffic Zones

4. The French Inshore traffic zone extends from Cap Gris Nez in the north to a line drawn due west near Le Touquet in the South. The English Inshore Traffic Zone (EITZ) extends from a line drawn from the western end of the scheme to include Shoreham to a line drawn due South from South Foreland.

5. A vessel of less than 20 metres in length, a sailing vessel and vessels engaged in fishing may, under all circumstances, use the English and the

French inshore traffic zones. With respect to the application of Rule 10(d) to **other** vessels, it is the view of the MCA that, where such a vessel commences its voyage from a location beyond one limit of either zone and proceeds to a location beyond the further limit of that zone, it should use the appropriate lane. Exceptions to this are when a vessel is calling at a port, pilot station or destination or sheltered waters within that zone. In all other cases, vessels should use the appropriate lane of the traffic separation scheme if it is safe to do so, unless some abnormal circumstances exist in that lane. In this context reduced visibility in this area is not considered by the MCA as an abnormal circumstance warranting the use of the zone.

6. Traffic surveys in the area show that, in general, the interest of safety are best served by excluding from the EITZ as many vessels, other than those with a clear need or right to use it, as possible. Accordingly, the MCA will consider legal action against vessels using the EITZ when they can safely use the appropriate traffic separation lane, (other than those exempted by Rule 10(d)). NE-bound vessels voyaging to the Thames or East Coast ports are required to use the NE-bound lane of the scheme where they can safely do so. A ruling on whether in any particular case a Master of a NE-bound vessel is justified on safety grounds in choosing to use the EITZ rather than the NE-bound lane is for the Courts to decide in the light of individual circumstances.

It should be noted that neither CNIS, or HM Coastguard has authority to interpret the Collision Regulations or grant permission for vessels to use the EITZ in contravention of Rule 10(d). Masters deciding that circumstances warrant their use of the EITZ should report their decision to CNIS.

Passage Planning/Crossing Traffic Lanes

7. Radar surveillance surveys show that many vessels proceeding from the NE Lane towards the Thames and East Coast ports use the MPC buoy as a turning point irrespective of the traffic present in the SW lane. Masters are reminded that crossing the lane in compliance with Rule 10(c) can be made anywhere approximately 5 miles to the NE or SW of the MPC Buoy. In selecting the crossing point regard should be given to traffic in the SW Lane and the need to avoid the development of risk of collision situations with such traffic. Surveillance surveys also indicate

that risk of collision increases if cross channel traffic, leaving Dover or the Calais approach channel, shape courses without due regard to the traffic situation in the adjacent lane. Vessels proceeding along the traffic lanes, in meeting their obligations under Rules 15 and 16, are often observed making substantial course alterations and their actions are frequently complicated when traffic converges within a particular lane. Attention is therefore drawn to the need for cross channel traffic to take into account this possible situation arising when passage planning. Consideration should also be given to where the lane is to be crossed so that the collision risk situations can be anticipated and are not allowed to develop.

Regulations for Prevention of Collisions - General

8. Use of the scheme in accordance with Rule 10 does not in any way alter the over-riding requirement for vessels to comply with the other Rules. **In particular, vessels, other than those referred to in Rule 10(k) and Rule 10(l), do not by virtue of using the traffic lanes in accordance with Rule 10 enjoy any privilege or right of way that they would not have elsewhere.** In addition, vessels using the traffic separation scheme are not relieved of the requirement to keep a proper lookout and of the requirement to proceed at a safe speed, especially in conditions of restricted visibility, or to make course and/or speed alterations in accordance with Rule 8.

Crossing Traffic

9. Mariners are reminded that there is a concentration of crossing ferry traffic, including high speed craft, in the Strait. These vessels may make course alterations outside the lanes in order to cross them at right angles.

Rules 10(b)(ii) and 10(b)(iii)

10. The MCA also wishes to draw attention to Rule 10(b)(iii) which requires vessels normally to join and leave a traffic lane at the termination of the lane. This rule does not preclude a vessel from joining a lane from the side at a small angle to the general direction of traffic flow. Consequently, vessels bound SW from location in the EITZ are advised to join the SW lane as soon as it is safe and practicable to do so.

All vessels are advised to keep clear of boundary separation lines or zones in accordance with Rule

10(b)(ii). Failure to observe this rule has resulted in repeated damage to the CS4 buoy. This buoy is protected by a charted "area to be avoided" (ABTA) by all vessels.

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