

M-Notices – December 2009 Telegraph

MIN 357 (M) — Navigation safety: guidance to the master for avoiding dangerous situations in adverse weather and sea conditions

This note draws attention to a 2008 incident in which a seafarer died after being struck by a large wave onboard his vessel in the South China Sea. It reminds masters, deck officers, owners and operators that early evasive action should be taken against ‘significantly larger waves’ when navigating in areas prone to adverse weather conditions.

MIN 357 provides a formula for evaluating the risk of encountering waves significantly larger than the usual maximum height in particular conditions. This formula is based on the findings of MCA research project 509.

Once the master has established that there is a risk of encountering significantly larger waves on the voyage, he or she should refer to MSC circular 1228: ‘Revised guidance to the master for avoiding dangerous situations in adverse weather and sea conditions’. A copy of the circular is provided in the annex to MIN 357.

MGN 401 (M+F) — Navigation: vessel traffic services (VTS) and local port services (LPS) in the United Kingdom

This note provides detailed guidance on the planning, establishment and running of a vessel traffic service (VTS) and a local port service (LPS). The guidance was developed with the input of several maritime bodies, including Nautilus International. It is intended to complement the Port Marine Safety Code and the Guide to Good Practice on the management of safety in ports.

By monitoring vessel movements and providing navigational information and assistance, a VTS can support the safe passage of shipping and help to prevent pollution incidents. But a VTS can require large public and/or private investments, so a formal risk assessment and cost/benefit analysis should be carried out before taking the decision to establish or to enhance a service in a particular area. MGN 401 offers information on this process, and on other preliminary considerations such as feasibility and design.

There are two categories of VTS: port/harbour or coastal. Statutory harbour authorities have responsibility for the former, while the MCA deals with the latter. A coastal VTS will usually involve only an information service, while the port/harbour VTS has a more directional role. MGN 401 also defines the concept of LPS for places where VTS is assessed as excessive.

The guidance note offers a range of information on how to operate a VTS, noting that different ports and coastal areas will require different types and levels of service according to the needs identified at the planning stage. Operational guidance in MGN 401 includes the equipment needed, the personnel required and the legislation to be adhered to. The full legislative framework is set out in Annex 2.

MSN 1734 (M+F) Amendment 3 — Approval of marine equipment (EC notified bodies)

This notice sets out the legal requirements for testing and approving marine equipment as of 21 July 2009. The equipment in question covers appliances and craft used for lifesaving, pollution prevention, fire prevention, navigation and radio communication.

The document includes an updated list of the UK's designated EU Notified Bodies (which undertake type approval of marine equipment). In addition, it details all the items to which international type-approval regulations apply, pointing out the relevant regulations and testing standards.

MSN 1781 (M+F) Amendment — The merchant shipping (distress signals and prevention of collisions) regulations 1996: amendments to Annex IV (distress signals)

This notice details amendments to Annex IV of the Convention on the international regulations for preventing collisions at sea 1972 (Colregs). These amendments have been adopted by the International Maritime Organisation's Maritime Safety Committee and will come into force in the United Kingdom on 1 December 2009. MSN 1781 includes a copy of the revised Colregs Annex IV with the changed items highlighted. The changes relate to the use of the SOS distress signal and to distress alerts transmitted via VHF or satellite communications equipment.

MSN 1821 (M) — Approved medical practitioners (approved doctors) with effect from 1 September 2009

With effect from 1 September 2009, this notice updates:

- the list of medical practitioners approved to carry out UK seafarer medical examinations (ENG1)
- the list of companies with doctors approved by the MCA to conduct ENG1 examinations for their company employees only
- those approved healthcare providers with whom contractual services for the provision of ENG1 medicals may be arranged
- the list of medical referees appointed to carry out seafarer medical reviews (appeals)

It should be noted that an ENG1 medical certificate is not required for those operating on certain categories of small vessel operating fewer than 60 miles from shore. Details of the medical certificate required for such persons can be found in MGN 264 (M) and in the Your Health at Sea 6 leaflet.