
Navigation: Traffic Separation Schemes - Application of Rule 10 and Navigation in the Dover Strait

Notice to all Shipowners, Masters and all concerned with the navigation of Seagoing vessels

This notice replaces Marine Guidance Notes 128 and 200

PLEASE NOTE:-

Where this document provides guidance on the law it should not be regarded as definitive. The way the law applies to any particular case can vary according to circumstances - for example, from vessel to vessel and you should consider seeking independent legal advice if you are unsure of your own legal position.

Summary

- The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs) 1972 as amended, govern the conduct of all vessels in and near Traffic Separation Schemes (TSSs) which have been adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).
- This notice draws attention to mariners on the mandatory reporting regime and the recommendations for navigating within the Dover Strait.

1. Introduction/ Background

1.1 TSSs adopted by the IMO are set out in the IMO publication "Ships' Routeing", 9th Edition March 2008, and in the subsequent amendments and IMO Circulars.

1.2 A list of all existing TSS, both IMO-adopted and others, can be found in the Annual Summary of Admiralty Notices to Mariners (ANM) No.17 published early each year. Subsequent changes are in the weekly editions of Admiralty Notices to Mariners published on the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) website; www.ukho.gov.uk.

1.3 Rule 10 of the COLREGs, governs the conduct of all vessels in and near TSSs which have been adopted by IMO. A current version of the COLREGs is attached as an Annex to MSN 1781 (M+F) as amended.

1.4 In some schemes, special provisions may be included governing their use by specified classes of vessels. Relevant information is given on charts, or there may be a recommendation for chart users to consult Admiralty Sailing Directions for details.

2. Traffic Separation Schemes – Application of Rule 10

2.1 Admiralty charts show both IMO-adopted and national authority schemes. ANM Notice No.17 and IMO “Ships’ Routeing” should be consulted to determine whether a particular scheme has been adopted by the IMO.

2.2 TSSs are usually sited where there is a heavy concentration of shipping. Mariners are therefore reminded of the particular importance of strictly adhering to Rules 5, 6, 7 and 8, which refer to Look-out, Safe Speed, Risk of Collision, and Action to Avoid Collision.

Mariners are also reminded that except where there are special local rules to the contrary, the other Steering and Sailing Rules (Section II – Conduct of vessels in sight of one another and Section III – Conduct of vessels in restricted visibility) apply within a scheme as they do elsewhere at sea. Vessels proceeding in a TSS do not have priority over crossing traffic.

2.3 Vessels crossing a TSS must do so on a heading as nearly as practicable at right angles to the direction of traffic flow. This minimises the time a crossing vessel is in the lane irrespective of the tidal stream, and should lead to a clear encounter situation with vessels passing through the main traffic lanes.

2.4 Within the context of Rule 10(d) it is the view of the MCA that neither the density of traffic in a lane nor restricted visibility are sufficient reasons to justify the use of an Inshore Traffic Zone (ITZ), nor will the apparent absence of traffic in the ITZ qualify as a reason for not complying with this Rule.

2.5 Vessels may use an ITZ where necessary to seek shelter from weather, and whilst in an ITZ vessels may be encountered heading in any direction.

2.6 Where a TSS is bordered on both sides by an ITZ, a vessel must not use the ITZ except as permitted by Rule 10 (d).

2.7 A vessel which needs to anchor, for example because of an engine breakdown or bad visibility, may do so in a separation zone.

2.8 Vessels fishing within a Scheme are considered to be using the Scheme, and must comply with the general requirements set out in Rules 10(b) and (c), however, when fishing in a separation zone they may follow any course.

2.9 The requirement that vessels fishing must not impede the passage of traffic passing through a TSS, means that they must not operate in such a manner that neither they, nor their gear, seriously restricts the sea room available to other vessels within a lane, and must take early and substantial action to avoid any risk of collision developing.

2.10 Rule 8(f) places further obligations upon fishing vessels, with regard to their responsibility not to impede the passage of any vessel following a traffic lane, and fishing vessels are not relieved from this obligation in a developing situation where risk of collision may exist. When taking any action they must, however, take account of the possible manoeuvres of the vessel which is not to be impeded.

2.11 No specific mention is made in Rule 10(j) of a sailing vessel having an auxiliary engine, however, if such a vessel cannot follow the routeing procedures under sail because of light or adverse winds, then she should make use of her engines in order to do so, and should show the appropriate lights, shapes and sound signals for a power-driven vessel.

2.12 Maintenance of Safety of Navigation includes maintenance of navigational buoys and aids to navigation, wreck removal, hydrographic surveying and in certain circumstances dredging.

2.13 Many TSSs have Precautionary Areas associated with them, where traffic lanes cross or converge, so that proper separation of traffic is not possible. Precautionary Areas should be avoided, if practicable, by ships not making use of the associated schemes or deep-water routes.

Precautionary areas are not part of a TSS, and Rule 10 is not generally applicable, however, ships should navigate with particular caution within such areas.

2.14 Any vessel observed in a TSS which appears not to be complying with the requirements of the Scheme should be immediately notified by the best available means. If the TSS is within a Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) coverage area, the VTS should be notified.

2.15 The international two-letter signal YG meaning “you appear not to be complying with the TSS” may also be used for this purpose. The master of any vessel receiving this signal by whatever means should check their course and position and immediately take action to rectify the situation.

3. Traffic Separation Schemes – Navigation in the Dover Strait

3.1 Summary

The Dover Strait is covered by a TSS, adopted by the IMO, which is bordered by the English ITZ and the French ITZ. The TSS and associated ITZs, the Channel Navigation Information Service (CNIS) and the Mandatory Reporting System CALDOVREP (established in accordance with SOLAS V – 2002 Regulation 11) have been designed to assist seafarers to navigate these waters in safety.

3.2 TSS

Information on the TSS is provided on British Admiralty chart 5500, in the Admiralty List of Radio Signals, Volume 6(1), in NP28–The Dover Strait Pilot and in ANM No.17 Any vessel transiting the Dover Strait must comply with the requirements of Rule 10.

3.3 ITZ

The English ITZ extends from a line drawn from the western end of the TSS to include Shoreham, to a line drawn due South from South Foreland. The French ITZ extends from Cap Gris-Nez in the north, to a line drawn due west near Le Touquet in the South.

Neither CNIS, nor HM Coastguard has authority to grant permission for vessels to use the English ITZ in contravention of Rule 10(d). Masters deciding that circumstances warrant their use of the English ITZ, must report their decision to CNIS. Vessels may enter the ITZ if necessary to avoid immediate danger.

3.4 CNIS

Shipping movements are monitored from both Dover and Gris-Nez. Each station broadcasts information about weather and navigational hazards as part of the joint CNIS.

All vessels are tracked and recorded by radar and AIS – any vessel found contravening the collision regulations will be reported to their flag state for appropriate action to be taken. Vessels contravening collision regulations and arriving at UK ports may be liable for prosecution.

3.5 CALDOVREP

The following categories of vessels are required to participate in the Reporting System:

1. All vessels of 300GT and over
2. All vessels of less than 300GT, in circumstances where they:-
 - (a) are not under command or at anchor in the TSS or an ITZ,
 - (b) are restricted in their ability to manoeuvre, or
 - (c) have defective navigational aids.

SW-bound vessels call 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 border between France and Belgium (51° 05'N; 002° 33'E).

NE-bound vessels call Gris-Nez Traffic on VHF Ch.13 when abeam the Bassurelle Light-buoy (50° 33'N; 000° 58'E).

4. Passage Planning

4.1 A passage plan and possible contingency arrangements containing all required reporting information, as well as the reporting points, should be prepared well in advance of reaching the outer limits of the reporting area. This will avoid last-minute decision-making, and searching for sources of information, enabling full concentration on traffic and navigation in the Dover Strait.

4.2 Mariners should be aware that concentrations of fishing vessels and recreational craft may be encountered in the English Channel and the Dover Strait and should navigate with caution. Fishing vessels are reminded of the requirements of Rule 10(i) and sailing vessels and other vessels of less than 20 metres in length of the requirements of Rule 10(j) of the COLREGs.

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

Vessels in either traffic lane may frequently have to give way to ferries and other crossing vessels in order to comply with the Steering and Sailing Rules (Rules 4 – 19) of the COLREGs.

4.4 Surveillance surveys 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 potential collision risk situations can be anticipated and are not allowed to develop. Passage planning should be dynamic and include selection and setting of a course as soon as practicable.

4.5 NE-bound vessels sailing to the Thames or UK 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 was justified on safety grounds in choosing to use the English ITZ rather than the NE-bound lane can only be given in a court of law.

4.6 Radar surveillance surveys show that many vessels proceeding from the NE lane towards the Thames and UK east coast ports cross the TSS in the vicinity of the MPC light-buoy. Masters are recommended to cross the SW lane in compliance with Rule 10(c) anywhere up to approximately 5 miles NE of the MPC light-buoy. In selecting the crossing

point regard should be given to traffic in the SW Lane and the need to avoid the development of situations where risk of collision exists.

4.7 The F3 light-float (51° 24.15N; 002° 00.38E) is in an area of heavy crossing traffic. Ships leaving the West Hinder TSS, and intending to transit the Dover Strait should leave the F3 on their port side, and must avoid the area within 500 metres of the light-float, when crossing the NE-bound traffic lane of the Dover Strait TSS and proceeding through the Precautionary Area.

4.8 Many vessels keep too close to the north of the SW-bound lane between South Falls and Dungeness, risking collision with the CS4 light-buoy and vessels in the English ITZ. Vessels should therefore make use of the full width of the traffic lanes and open waters to reduce collision risks. An 'area to be avoided by all vessels'; radius 3 cables, has been established around the CS4 light-buoy.

4.9 The main traffic lane for NE-bound traffic lies to the SE of the Sandettié Bank and should be followed by all such ships as can safely navigate therein having regard to their draught.

4.10 The deep-water route to the NW of the Sandettié Bank is intended for use by vessels with a draught of 16 metres or more. Masters considering using this route should take into account the proximity of traffic using the SW-bound lane. Through traffic to which this consideration does not apply should, if practicable, avoid using the deep-water route.

4.11 In two-way routes, including two-way deep-water routes, vessels should, as far as practicable, keep to the starboard side of the marked route. Vessels using deep-water routes are recommended to avoid overtaking.

4.12 Master of ships, when planning their passage through the Dover Strait and its approaches, should ensure that there is an adequate under-keel clearance at the time of passage. To achieve this, allowance must be made for the effects of squat at the passage speed, for uncertainties in charted depths and tide levels, and for the effects of waves and swell resulting from local and distant storms.

4.13 In assessing a safe under-keel allowance, masters of vessels constrained by their draught are strongly advised to consult the Sailing Directions, Mariners' Routeing Guides and Deep-Draught Planning Guides published for the area by hydrographic offices, and to be guided by the recommendations for under-keel allowance contained therein.

4.14 When calculating the depth of water, mariners are reminded that the height of the tide in mid-Strait can be up to one metre less than predicted for the adjacent standard port.

4.15 Vessels transiting the SW lane are permitted to pass either side of the Varne Bank.

5. Recreational Activities in a UK TSS.

5.1 Recreational diving within a UK TSS, although not recommended, is permitted provided it is carried out in accordance with British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC), British Diving Safety Group (BDSG) safe diving practices and MCA guidelines, which generally advise against diving in areas of heavy surface traffic. Chartered, private or club dive support craft must always proceed in the general direction of traffic flow for that lane. They should not impede the safe passage of a power-driven vessel following a traffic lane, nor should they anchor in the lane.

5.2 Recreational divers considering participating in diving in any TSS, are reminded that deep draught and high speed ships transiting TSSs may be unable to detect typical diving

surface marker buoys at distance. Some vessels may also have a draught in excess of 10 metres, which may pose additional problems for divers contemplating decompression stops above that depth. Such vessels also generate wash and wake that may create difficulties when recovering divers from the water, or for dive support craft with low freeboards.

5.3 Masters of dive support craft in the Dover Strait should always advise CNIS, of their intentions in order to promote diving safety, and to benefit from any safety advice that may be available.

5.4 Mariners should be aware that during summer months (April-September) through traffic may encounter channel crossings by swimmers or other unorthodox craft. These will normally be attended by support vessels fitted with AIS and complying with the COLREGs. Information regarding these crossings is routinely broadcast by CNIS.

More Information

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File Ref: MNA 136/003/0031

Published: May 2008

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Printed on material containing minimum 75% post-consumer waste paper

*An executive agency of the
Department for
Transport*

INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS FOR PREVENTING COLLISIONS AT SEA, 1972 (as amended by Resolutions A464 (XII), A626 (15), A678 (16), A736 (18) and A.910 (22))

Rule 10

Traffic separation schemes

- (a) This Rule applies to traffic separation schemes adopted by the Organization and does not relieve any vessel of her obligation under any other Rule.
- (b) A vessel using a traffic separation scheme shall:
 - (i) proceed in the appropriate traffic lane in the general direction of traffic flow for that lane;
 - (ii) so far as practicable keep clear of a traffic separation line or separation zone;
 - (iii) normally join or leave a traffic lane at the termination of the lane, but when joining or leaving from either side shall do so at as small an angle to the general direction of traffic flow as practicable.
- (c) A vessel shall, so far as practicable, avoid crossing traffic lanes but if obliged to do so shall cross on a heading as nearly as practicable at right angles to the general direction of traffic flow.
- (d)
 - (i) A vessel shall not use an inshore traffic zone when she can safely use the appropriate traffic lane within the adjacent traffic separation scheme. However, vessels of less than 20 metres in length, sailing vessels and vessels engaged in fishing may use the inshore traffic zone.
 - (ii) Notwithstanding sub-paragraph (d) (i), a vessel may use an inshore traffic zone when en route to or from a port, offshore installation or structure, pilot station or any other place situated within the inshore traffic zone, or to avoid immediate danger.
- (e) A vessel other than a crossing vessel or a vessel joining or leaving a lane shall not normally enter a separation zone or cross a separation line except:
 - (i) in cases of emergency to avoid immediate danger;
 - (ii) to engage in fishing within a separation zone.
- (f) A vessel navigating in areas near the terminations of traffic separation schemes shall do so with particular caution.
- (g) A vessel shall so far as practicable avoid anchoring in a traffic separation scheme or in areas near its terminations.
- (h) A vessel not using a traffic separation scheme shall avoid it by as wide a margin as is practicable.
- (i) A vessel engaged in fishing shall not impede the passage of any vessel following a traffic lane.
- (j) A vessel of less than 20 metres in length or a sailing vessel shall not impede the safe passage of a power-driven vessel following a traffic lane.
- (k) A vessel restricted in her ability to manoeuvre when engaged in an operation for the maintenance of safety of navigation in a traffic separation scheme is exempted from complying with this Rule to the extent necessary to carry out the operation.
- (l) A vessel restricted in her ability to manoeuvre when engaged in an operation for the laying, servicing or picking up of a submarine cable, within a traffic separation scheme, is exempted from complying with this Rule to the extent necessary to carry out the operation.