



NAVIGATION: Vessel Traffic Services – COVID-19 Impact and Safety Measures

Notice to all Port and VTS Authorities, VTS Personnel, Masters and Deck Officers of Merchant Vessels, and Skippers and Watch Keepers of Fishing and Recreational Craft.

This Note should be read in conjunction with MGN 401 (M+F) Amendment 2.

This MIN expires 31 December 2020 or advised otherwise

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 should consider seeking independent legal advice if you are unsure of your own legal position.

Summary

This Note is published pursuant to the wider impact of COVID-19 (a type of Coronavirus), especially on full functionality of one or more of the service types by a VTS Authority.

It is recognised that due to unprecedented measures being introduced and advised by the UK Government, responsible endeavours towards implementing the “social distance” measures and any direct impact of the pandemic, VTS authorities may not be able to fully discharge their declared functions.

This Note, therefore, endeavours to provide information and guidance in the interim extenuating circumstances, to ensure continued level of safety of shipping, maritime users, members of the public and the protection of the marine environment, where a VTS authority may need to reduce or otherwise downgrade one or more of its services.



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The World Health Organisation defines Coronaviruses as a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. COVID-19 is the name given to the infectious disease caused by the strain of coronavirus recently discovered in Wuhan, China during December 2019.
- 1.2 UK Government has introduced various measures and guidance, via [advisory on social distancing measures](#), we should all be taking to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Consequently, personnel employed in the essential services like the VTS may also have to adopt commensurate measures at their workplace to balance the above with the discharge of essential services indispensable to maritime safety.

2. VTS self-protection measures

- 2.1 All VTS authorities, in consultation with their Statutory Harbour Authority (SHA), should undertake a COVID-19 targeted risk assessment to identify, mitigate and manage the risks to VTS services posed by COVID-19. The aim being an adequate level of service to ensure general maritime safety is delivered.
- 2.2 Management may include local site-specific measures to employ 'social distancing' and minimal cover to be able to deliver electronic system usages, such as the traffic picture, radar images, VHF radio, telephones etc.
- 2.3 The VTS authorities should also risk assess any immediate and future effects on the delivery of their services and evaluate measures to bring about adjustments to the level of traffic service provision in the event of man-power shortages resulting from the COVID-19 impact directly and/or indirectly.

3. Further actions

- 3.1 If a VTS authority has determined that normal levels of services cannot be maintained they should inform MCA at the below contacts and confirm that satisfactory risk assessments were undertaken and that their SHA has been informed as well as all the relevant and affected parties and stakeholders.
- 3.2 Additionally, the SHA should advise United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO), as regards issuing an update to their list of radio signals (ALRS6); this should also be followed by a local notice to mariners to keep all interested parties apprised of essential maritime safety information and current levels of service being offered.



More Information

Navigation Safety Branch
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

Tel: +44 (0)20 381 72000
e-mail: navigationsafety@mca.gov.uk

Website Address: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency

General Enquiries: infoline@mca.gov.uk

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