



Fishing Vessels, Small Commercial Vessels and Workboats - Decked and Open Vessel - Interpretation on Positive Freeboard and Decked or Open Vessel

Notice to all Builders, Designers, Surveyors, Operators and Skippers of UK under 15m Fishing Vessels, and Small Commercial Vessels and Workboats.

This notice should be read with:

The Merchant Shipping (Vessels in Commercial Use for Sport or Pleasure) Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/2771) as amended;*

The Safety of Small Commercial Motor Vessels - A Code of Practice (Yellow)

The Safety of Small Commercial Sailing Vessels - A Code of Practice (Blue)

The Safety of Small Vessels in Commercial Use for Sport or Pleasure Operating from a Nominated Departure Point (NDP) - A Code of Practice (Red)

The Merchant Shipping (Small Workboats and Pilot Boats) Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/1609) as amended;*

*The Safety of Small Workboats and Pilot Boats - A Code of Practice (Brown);
and the UK Under 15m Fishing Vessel Code*

Summary

This Note provides guidance on how to determine positive freeboard and clear height at side for all newbuild UK under 15m fishing vessels. It also provides an interpretation on how vessels with an internal hull moulding built to create a cockpit or cabin sole should be treated for UK under 15m Fishing Vessels as well as Small Commercial Vessels and Workboats.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Newbuild under 15m Fishing Vessels are required to be built to Seafish Rules and the MCA Document MSIS 27 Ch.1 Annex 3, which require an under 15m Fishing Vessel with a continuous watertight weather deck to have "positive freeboard". Without an interpretation of positive freeboard or when a sole becomes a deck, it could mean that a small craft with a typical open cockpit and closed cabin arrangement could be left with just a 1mm positive freeboard, which could be dangerous and contrary to Load Line regulations. It may lead to the ingress of water through scuppers in the bulwarks, which are designed for water egress, particularly when heavily loaded.



- 1.2 For Small Commercial Vessels and Workboats freeboard requirements are based on a range of freeboard based on length and whether the vessel is decked or an open boat. For this reason, a similar interpretation is applied by this MGN for UK under 15m Fishing Vessels.
- 1.3 There are many small craft including fishing vessels designed and built with an inner shell that forms the sole plate (the board on which the crew stand within the cockpit which is laminated into the shell of the hull). It has come to the MCA's attention that it can be difficult to identify when a sole board from a moulded lining provides sufficient depth in bilges to actually become a watertight weather deck. This is important because resolving the questions on decked vessels and open boats requires the identification of what is a continuous watertight weather deck, a partial weather deck, or an open boat. This question is equally relevant to Fishing Vessels, Small Commercial Vessels and Workboats.

2. Positive Freeboard and Clear Height at Side for UK Under 15m Fishing Vessels

- 2.1 Where Seafish Rules and MSIS 27 Ch.1 Annex 3 require UK under 15m fishing vessels to have positive freeboard: -

“Positive Freeboard”; for a decked under 15m fishing vessel means: -

For decked vessels with a continuous watertight weather deck which is neither stepped or recessed or raised, when fully loaded with cargo and non-cargo deadweight items certificated to be carried (each person taken as 75kg), the vessel should, when in an upright condition, have a freeboard measured down from the lowest point of the weather deck of not less than 300mm for a vessel of 7m in length or under and not less than 627mm for vessels of 14.99m in length. For a vessel of intermediate length the freeboard should be determined by linear interpolation. See diagrams at Section 4 for a visual explanation of “continuous watertight weather deck which is neither stepped or recessed or raised”.

For decked vessels with a continuous watertight weather deck which may be stepped, recessed or raised, when fully loaded with cargo and non-cargo deadweight items certificated to be carried (each person taken as 75kg), the vessel should, when in an upright condition, have a freeboard measured down from the lowest point of the weather deck of not less than 200mm for a vessel of 7m in length or under and not less than 345mm for vessels of 14.99m in length. For a vessel of intermediate length the freeboard should be determined by linear interpolation. The raised portions of the watertight weather deck should extend across the full breadth of the vessel and the average freeboard over the length of the vessel should be no less than the requirement for freeboard of a vessel with a continuous watertight weather deck which is neither stepped, recessed or raised. See diagrams at Section 4 for a visual explanation of “continuous watertight weather deck which may be stepped, recessed or raised”.

- 2.2 For safety reasons, UK under 15m Fishing Vessels which are Open Vessels (meaning a vessel which is not a decked vessel) should have a positive clear height at side.

“Positive Clear Height at Side”; for an Open Vessels which is a fishing vessel means: -

The distance between the waterline (in an upright and fully loaded condition) and the lowest point on the gunwale is not less than 400mm for a vessel of 7m in length or under and not less than 690mm for a vessel of 14.99m in length. For a vessel of intermediate length the clear height at side should be determined by linear interpolation. The clear height at side should be measured to the top of the gunwale or capping or to the top of the wash strake if one is fitted above the capping. See diagrams at Section 4 for guidance.



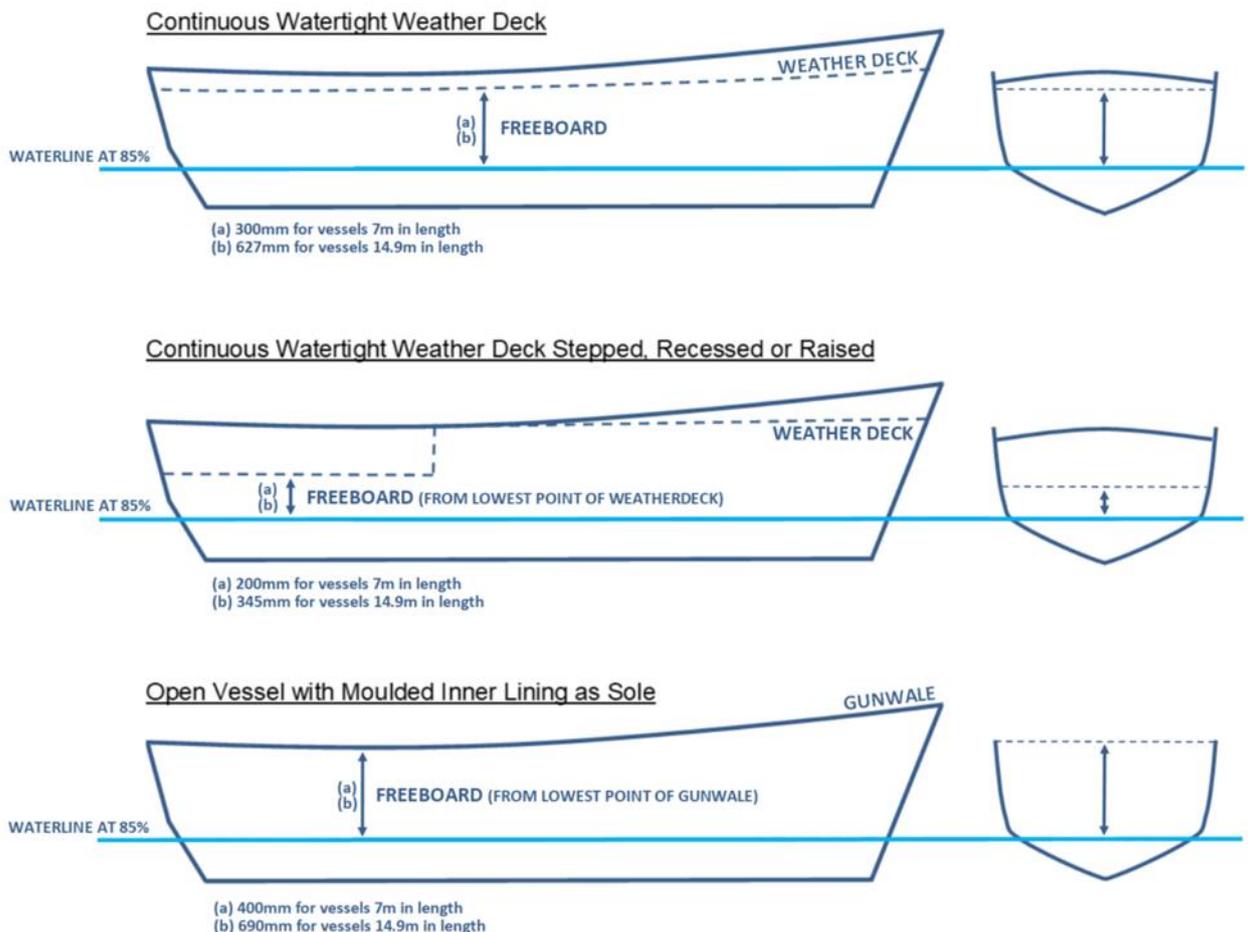
3. Identifying Open Vessels with a Moulded Sole – Interpretation

- 3.1 The following text is to be used as a common interpretation for the construction and survey of Newbuild UK under 15m Fishing Vessels, and when applying Sections 4.3.1 and 12.2.2.1 of MGN 280 for Small Commercial Vessels and Workboats.

An internal hull moulding built to create a cockpit or cabin sole is not to be considered a watertight weather deck unless the space below the sole is permanently protected from water ingress (except for watertight hatches which are to be kept closed at sea) and provides a space to be used for either accommodation, shelter of persons, stowage, or permanent reserve buoyancy which is designed to provide the greatest practicable contribution to stability and survivability of the vessel in the flooded condition. See diagrams below for explanation of the difference between a moulded sole and a watertight weather deck.

- 3.2 Also, for Small Commercial Vessels and Workboats, a decked vessel which does not comply with the freeboard requirements and does not possess reserve buoyancy above the weather deck, should be treated as an open boat and be provided with bilge pumping arrangements. Refer to Section 6.4.2 of MGN280.

4. Identifying Decked Vessels and Open Vessels – Common Interpretation Diagrams



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