



NAVIGATION: Safe and Responsible Anchoring Practices – Avoiding Damage to Submarine Cables and Pipelines

Notice to all Masters; Ship operators & Managers; Skippers of Fishing Vessels and Small Commercially Operated Vessels and Yachts; and Pleasure Craft.

This MIN expires 31 December 2021

Summary

This Note highlights the importance of full awareness of the submarine pipelines and cables on the seabed, prior and during anchoring operations, following a recent incident investigated by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB).

In view of the serious consequences resulting from damage to submarine cables, vessel operators should take special care when anchoring, fishing, dredging, or engaging in underwater operations near areas where these cables may exist or have been reported to exist. In order to minimize the risk of such damage as much as possible, vessels should avoid any such activity near either side of submarine cables.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 United Kingdom Hydrographic Office publication, *The Mariner's Handbook*, has detailed guidance provided under the topic "**Submarine Pipelines and Cables**". This guidance should be particularly referred with regard to anchor operations, especially if these are to be in the vicinity of such submarine features.
- 1.2 The above guidance is based on the International Hydrographic Office (IHO) standards and resolutions on the navigational chart specifications. Whereby submarine cables, including disused cables, are charted to clearly indicate their presence to vessels engaged in anchoring, trawling or seabed activities. The publicly available IHO standard, **S-4 Part B, Section 400 – Hydrography and Aids to Navigation**, provides more details on such seabed features.



2. Damages to Submarine Cables or Pipelines

2.1 As both the Mariners Handbook and the above IHO standard highlight, anchoring operations near submarine cables or pipelines may create potential hazards, such as:

- imparting electric shock to any vessel fouling or breaking the cable;
- possible capsizing of a small vessel if its fishing gear or anchor is trapped under the cable;
- loss of gear (trawls or anchor cables);
- loss of buoyancy due to gas aerated water; and
- fire/explosion around the pipelines.

2.2 Submarine cables also support national infrastructure, such as the electricity grid and telecommunications. Therefore, damages would also affect such critical services, as has been experienced. Likewise, the pipelines are often used to transport oil or gas under high pressure.

3. Navigational Chart Depiction of Submarine Cables and Pipelines

3.1 On charts, pipelines carry an appropriate legend, whether Water, Gas or Oil, if known. Additionally, in the case of oil or gas pipelines a suitable **cautionary note** is shown.

3.2 Areas where anchoring, fishing and other underwater activities are prohibited on account of cables are, where known, usually clearly shown on the chart and mentioned in **Admiralty Sailing Directions**.

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@mcga.gov.uk

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

General Enquiries: infoline@mcga.gov.uk

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