

Circular 51 / 2013

To: Vessel Managers, Masters, Officers, Deputy Registrars, Surveyors and Other Interested Parties

Subject: Principles to be observed in keeping a Navigational Watch

Date: 13.02.13

Summary

Maritime Cook Islands reminds Masters, officers and other interested parties to take note of the following requirements and requires ensure they be implemented for the safety of the crew, passengers, vessel and environment. In two recent incidents, investigations have revealed that the lookout requirements were not being complied with.

In accordance with the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers Code A, Chapter VIII

PART 4 – WATCHKEEPING AT SEA

Principles applying to watchkeeping generally

9 Parties shall direct the attention of companies, masters, chief engineer officers and watchkeeping personnel to the following principles, which shall be observed to ensure that safe watches are maintained at all times.

10 The master of every ship is bound to ensure that watchkeeping arrangements are adequate for maintaining a safe navigational or cargo watch. Under the master's general direction, the officers of the navigational watch are responsible for navigating the ship safely during their periods of duty, when they will be particularly concerned with avoiding collision and stranding.

11 The chief engineer officer of every ship is bound, in consultation with the master, to ensure that watchkeeping arrangements are adequate to maintain a safe engineering watch.

Protection of marine environment

12 The master, officers and ratings shall be aware of the serious effects of operational or accidental pollution of the marine environment and shall take all possible precautions to prevent such pollution, particularly within the framework of relevant international and port regulations.

Part 4-1 – Principles to be observed in keeping a navigational watch

13 The officer in charge of the navigational watch is the master's representative and is primarily responsible at all times for the safe navigation of the ship and for complying with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, as amended.

Lookout

14 A proper lookout shall be maintained at all times in compliance with rule 5 of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, as amended and shall serve the purpose of:

- .1 maintaining a continuous state of vigilance by sight and hearing, as well as by all other available means, with regard to any significant change in the operating environment;
- .2 fully appraising the situation and the risk of collision, stranding and other dangers to navigation; and
- .3 detecting ships or aircraft in distress, shipwrecked persons, wrecks, debris and other hazards to safe navigation

15 The lookout must be able to give full attention to the keeping of a proper lookout and no other duties shall be undertaken or assigned which could interfere with that task.

16 The duties of the lookout and helmsperson are separate and the helmsperson shall not be considered to be the lookout while steering, except in small ships where an unobstructed all-round view is provided at the steering position and there is no impairment of night vision or other impediment

to the keeping of a proper lookout. The officer in charge of the navigational watch may be the sole lookout in daylight provided that, on each such occasion:

- .1 the situation has been carefully assessed and it has been established without doubt that it is safe to do so;
- .2 full account has been taken of all relevant factors, including, but not limited to:
 - state of weather;
 - visibility;
 - traffic density;
 - proximity of dangers to navigation; and
 - the attention necessary when navigating in or near traffic separation schemes; and
- .3 assistance is immediately available to be summoned to the bridge when any change in the situation so requires.

17 In determining that the composition of the navigational watch is adequate to ensure that a proper lookout can continuously be maintained, the master shall take into account all relevant factors, including those described in this section of the Code, as well as the following factors:

- .1 visibility, state of weather and sea;
- .2 traffic density, and other activities occurring in the area in which the vessel is navigating;
- .3 the attention necessary when navigating in or near traffic separation schemes or other routing measures;
- .4 the additional workload caused by the nature of the ship's functions, immediate operating requirements and anticipated manoeuvres;
- .5 the fitness for duty of any crew members on call who are assigned as members of the watch;
- .6 knowledge of, and confidence in, the professional competence of the ship's officers and crew;
- .7 the experience of each officer of the navigational watch, and the familiarity of that officer with the ship's equipment, procedures, and manoeuvring capability;
- .8 activities taking place on board the ship at any particular time, including radio communication activities, and the availability of assistance to be summoned immediately to the bridge when necessary;
- .9 the operational status of bridge instrumentation and controls, including alarm systems;
- .10 rudder and propeller control and ship manoeuvring characteristics;
- .11 the size of the ship and the field of vision available from the conning position;
- .12 the configuration of the bridge, to the extent such configuration might inhibit a member of the watch from detecting by sight or hearing any external development; and
- .13 any other relevant standard, procedure or guidance relating to watchkeeping arrangements and fitness for duty which has been adopted by the Organization.

Watch arrangements

18 When deciding the composition of the watch on the bridge, which may include appropriately qualified ratings, the following factors, inter alia, shall be taken into account:

- .1 at no time shall the bridge be left unattended;
- .2 weather conditions, visibility and whether there is daylight or darkness;
- .3 proximity of navigational hazards which may make it necessary for the officer in charge of the watch to carry out additional navigational duties;
- .4 use and operational condition of navigational aids such as ECDIS, radar or electronic position-indicating devices and any other equipment affecting the safe navigation of the ship;
- .5 whether the ship is fitted with automatic steering;
- .6 whether there are radio duties to be performed;

.7 unmanned machinery space (UMS) controls, alarms and indicators provided on the bridge, procedures for their use and their limitations; and

.8 any unusual demands on the navigational watch that may arise as a result of special operational circumstances.

Taking over the watch

19 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall not hand over the watch to the relieving officer if there is reason to believe that the latter is not capable of carrying out the watchkeeping duties effectively, in which case the master shall be notified.

20 The relieving officer shall ensure that the members of the relieving watch are fully capable of performing their duties, particularly as regards their adjustment to night vision. Relieving officers shall not take over the watch until their vision is fully adjusted to the light conditions.

21 Prior to taking over the watch, relieving officers shall satisfy themselves as to the ship's estimated or true position and confirm its intended track, course and speed, and UMS controls as appropriate and shall note any dangers to navigation expected to be encountered during their watch.

22 Relieving officers shall personally satisfy themselves regarding the:

.1 standing orders and other special instructions of the master relating to navigation of the ship;

.2 position, course, speed and draught of the ship;

.3 prevailing and predicted tides, currents, weather, visibility and the effect of these factors upon course and speed;

.4 procedures for the use of main engines to manoeuvre when the main engines are on bridge control; and

.5 navigational situations, including, but not limited to:

.5.1 the operational condition of all navigational and safety equipment being used or likely to be used during the watch;

.5.2 the errors of gyro- and magnetic compasses;

.5.3 the presence and movement of ships in sight or known to be in the vicinity;

.5.4 the conditions and hazards likely to be encountered during the watch; and

.5.5 the possible effects of heel, trim, water density and squat on under-keel clearance.

23 If, at any time, the officer in charge of the navigational watch is to be relieved when a manoeuvre or other action to avoid any hazard is taking place, the relief of that officer shall be deferred until such action has been completed.

Performing the navigational watch

24 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall:

.1 keep the watch on the bridge;

.2 in no circumstances leave the bridge until properly relieved; and

.3 continue to be responsible for the safe navigation of the ship, despite the presence of the master on the bridge, until informed specifically that the master has assumed that responsibility and this is mutually understood.

25 During the watch, the course steered, position and speed shall be checked at sufficiently frequent intervals, using any available navigational aids necessary, to ensure that the ship follows the planned course.

26 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall have full knowledge of the location and operation of all safety and navigational equipment on board the ship and shall be aware and take account of the operating limitations of such equipment.

27 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall not be assigned or undertake any duties which would interfere with the safe navigation of the ship.

28 When using radar, the officer in charge of the navigational watch shall bear in mind the necessity to comply at all times with the provisions on the use of radar contained in the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, as amended in force.

29 In cases of need, the officer in charge of the navigational watch shall not hesitate to use the helm, engines and sound signalling apparatus. However, timely notice of intended variations of engine speed shall be given where possible or effective use shall be made of UMS engine controls provided on the bridge in accordance with the applicable procedures.

30 Officers of the navigational watch shall know the handling characteristics of their ship, including its stopping distances, and should appreciate that other ships may have different handling characteristics.

31 A proper record shall be kept during the watch of the movements and activities relating to the navigation of the ship.

32 It is of special importance that at all times the officer in charge of the navigational watch ensures that a proper lookout is maintained. In a ship with a separate chartroom, the officer in charge of the navigational watch may visit the chartroom, when essential, for a short period for the necessary performance of navigational duties, but shall first ensure that it is safe to do so and that proper lookout is maintained.

33 Operational tests of shipboard navigational equipment shall be carried out at sea as frequently as practicable and as circumstances permit, in particular before hazardous conditions affecting navigation are expected. Whenever appropriate, these tests shall be recorded. Such tests shall also be carried out prior to port arrival and departure.

34 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall make regular checks to ensure that:

- .1 the person steering the ship or the automatic pilot is steering the correct course;
- .2 the standard compass error is determined at least once a watch and, when possible, after any major alteration of course; the standard and gyro-compasses are frequently compared and repeaters are synchronized with their master compass;
- .3 the automatic pilot is tested manually at least once a watch;
- .4 the navigation and signal lights and other navigational equipment are functioning properly;
- .5 the radio equipment is functioning properly in accordance with paragraph 86 of this section; and
- .6 the UMS controls, alarms and indicators are functioning properly.

35 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall bear in mind the necessity to comply at all times with the requirements in force of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974*. The officer of the navigational watch shall take into account:

* See SOLAS regulations V/24, V/25 and V/26.

- .1 the need to station a person to steer the ship and to put the steering into manual control in good time to allow any potentially hazardous situation to be dealt with in a safe manner; and
- .2 that, with a ship under automatic steering, it is highly dangerous to allow a situation to develop to the point where the officer in charge of the navigational watch is without assistance and has to break the continuity of the lookout in order to take emergency action.

36 Officers of the navigational watch shall be thoroughly familiar with the use of all electronic navigational aids carried, including their capabilities and limitations, and shall use each of these aids when appropriate and shall bear in mind that the echo-sounder is a valuable navigational aid.

37 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall use the radar whenever restricted visibility is encountered or expected, and at all times in congested waters, having due regard to its limitations.

38 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall ensure that the range scales employed are changed at sufficiently frequent intervals so that echoes are detected as early as possible. It shall be borne in mind that small or poor echoes may escape detection.

39 Whenever radar is in use, the officer in charge of the navigational watch shall select an appropriate range scale and observe the display carefully, and shall ensure that plotting or systematic analysis is commenced in ample time.

40 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall notify the master immediately:

- .1 if restricted visibility is encountered or expected;
- .2 if the traffic conditions or the movements of other ships are causing concern;
- .3 if difficulty is experienced in maintaining course;

- .4 on failure to sight land, or a navigation mark or to obtain soundings by the expected time;
- .5 if, unexpectedly, land or a navigation mark is sighted or a change in soundings occurs;
- .6 on breakdown of the engines, propulsion machinery remote control, steering gear or any essential navigational equipment, alarm or indicator;
- .7 if the radio equipment malfunctions;
- .8 in heavy weather, if in any doubt about the possibility of weather damage;
- .9 if the ship meets any hazard to navigation, such as ice or a derelict; and
- .10 in any other emergency or if in any doubt.

41 Despite the requirement to notify the master immediately in the foregoing circumstances, the officer in charge of the navigational watch shall, in addition, not hesitate to take immediate action for the safety of the ship, where circumstances so require.

42 The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall give watchkeeping personnel all appropriate instructions and information which will ensure the keeping of a safe watch, including a proper lookout.

For further information or clarification please contact the Registrar of Ships, a Deputy Registrar or Fleet Manager at Maritime Cook Islands; alternatively you may contact Maritime Cook Islands Head Office at +682 23848 Phone, +682 23846 Fax, fleet@maritimecookislands.com

Please ensure this has been forwarded to interested parties.