

Commonwealth of Dominica**Office of the Maritime Administrator**

- TO:** ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF MERCHANT SHIPS, MOBILE OFFSHORE DRILLING UNITS AND RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS
- SUBJECT:** Safety of Navigation - Navigational Charts, Publications and Notices to Mariners
- REFERENCE:** IMO Resolution A. 413(XI) Para. 3.3.3.3.5
- PURPOSE:** This Circular provides advice and guidance to mariners on the importance of initiating and maintaining a regular and efficient system of chart and publication updating.
- APPLICABILITY:** This Circular applies to all ships under the Dominica International registry, including self-propelled Mobile Offshore Drilling Units.

REQUIREMENTS:

SOLAS Regulation V-20 requires all ships to carry, for the voyage intended or service in which they are engaged, adequate and up to date charts, sailing directions, light lists, tide tables and other nautical publications.

1.0 The investigation of strandings, problems with Traffic Separation Schemes and Route System contraventions continue to indicate a failure on the part of some mariners to keep charts and publications up to date. It is essential that any nautical publication that is liable to be affected by changes in navigational or hydrographic conditions be corrected and updated by every available means. The primary source of such information would be Radio Navigational Warnings, e.g., NAVTEX, Safety NET and Notices to Mariners. Failure to follow this basic procedure can place the Master, his vessel, and owners in an untenable legal position in the event of an accident.

2.0 Chart corrections have proven to be a major source of problems with port State control inspections as well. While it is appreciated that many vessels may be engaged in worldwide trading calling at ports in countries where Circulars to Mariners and other publications may not

be available, it is possible well in advance to order the current editions of sailing directions, tide and current tables, charts and chart corrections for delivery to the ship on a regular basis.

3.0 A new concise guide to the proper correction of charts has been published by the UK Admiralty Charts and Publications. Designed to be easy to use, the guide provides a range of examples of chart correcting techniques for the use of shipboard navigators. The publication, which is available from Admiralty Charts Agents (as Catalogue No. NP294) provides guidance on SOLAS best practice, which will be a basis for ISM Code auditing.

4.0 Dominica Nautical Inspectors have been instructed to pay particular attention to the carriage on board of charts and nautical publications appropriate to the service in which the ship is engaged. In the event that a Nautical Inspector determines the charts/publications are inadequate, or that an efficient correction procedure does not exist, immediate action will be required to correct the situation.

5.0 Masters and Officers should be aware of the danger of navigating without adequate under keel clearance. The practice of navigating through waters barely adequate in depth with a finely assessed under keel clearance based upon predicted tidal heights is not recommended, as the actual tidal rises may be appreciably lower than predicted. Wind conditions that may cause negative tidal surges should always be considered. Charted depths or soundings may not be current or may be based on surveys taken many years in the past.

6.0 Even charts based on recent surveys may not show all seabed obstructions or the shallowest depths. Hydrographic surveys have inherent technical limitations, due partly in some offshore areas to difficulties in accurately calculating tidal ranges. Furthermore, in some cases the depth of the seabed is constantly changing. Nautical charts should, therefore, not be absolutely relied upon in their representation of depth and, when tidal predictions are applied to the chart as if they were actual tide levels, the uncertainties are thereby compounded.

7.0 In areas such as estuaries and approaches to ports, where optimum under keel clearance cannot be obtained, Masters should carefully consider what is an appropriate speed having regard to the 'squat' characteristics of their particular ship. Masters are cautioned against being influenced by any interests outside the ship, commercial or otherwise, to proceed at a speed inconsistent with safe navigation.

8.0 It also is apparent that Masters of vessels must be keenly aware of the 'air draft' of vessels. That is, the distance from the waterline to the tallest structure on board. Several vessels that were operating in pilot waters recently have struck the underside of bridges. The root problem seems to be related to exercising booms and cranes on board, unusually high water and reliance, generally, on local pilots navigating the vessel without regard for the vessel's 'air draft' or bridge clearance.

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