PREVENTION OF COLLISIONS BETWEEN MERCHANT AND FISHING VESSELS IN CHINA'S COASTAL WATERS

Information Notice 61

Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators, Managers, Masters, Owners' Representatives, and Recognized Organizations

The Directorate would like to draw the attention of all concerned to the *Safety Reminder and Notification on Prevention of Collisions between Merchant Vessels and Fishing Vessels*, issued by the China Maritime Safety Administration (MSA), which is annexed to this information notice.

This safety reminder and notification supplements previous related guidelines and notices issued by the China MSA and is intended to further prevent collisions involving merchant vessels and fishing vessels and to ensure the safety of navigation.

All concerned are encouraged to bring this Information Notice and its annex to the attention of all relevant personnel serving on board and ashore. Any relevant procedures are to be duly considered, established, and maintained within the vessel's onboard Safety Management System (SMS), as appropriate. With reference to paragraph 1.1 of the Annex to this Information Notice, where continuous shore-based monitoring cannot be fully maintained due to technological constraints, compliance may be achieved through alternative measures, such as the receipt of updates from local agents, provided that these ensure the effective identification of navigational risks and the timely communication of relevant information to the fleet.

This Information Notice and its annex are not intended to amend, supersede, or substitute any requirements under applicable international conventions, codes, or regulations.

Merchant Shipping Directorate 03 July 2026

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ANNEX

Safety Reminder and Notification on Prevention of Collisions Between Merchant Vessels and Fishing Vessels

1.Be familiar with the requirements for main public routes along the Zhejiang coast. Navigate on the Starboard side when on main public routes and avoid anchoring/drifting on main public routes.

2. Navigate in accordance with the requirements specified in the Guidelines for Preventing Collision Accidents Between Merchant Vessels and Fishing Vessels Along the Chinese Coast.

3. Onboard equipment shall be in normal working condition (including VHF radio/AIS/radar/main engine/auxiliary engine, etc.).

4. Formulate a voyage plan, conduct pre-sailing safety meeting, conduct assessments on the collision risks between merchant vessels and fishing vessels in the navigational waters, and ensure the implementation of preventive measures.

5. The Master shall formulate and issue night orders in accordance with the special vigilance requirements for navigating through fishing grounds during nighttime.

(Master's Signature) :

（Date） :

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Safety Reminder List for Preventing Collisions Between Merchant Vessels and Fishing Vessels of ZheJiang MSA

Serial No.	Checklist Content
1	Before arrival at the port, ensure that the safety information on collision prevention between merchant vessels and fishing vessels transmitted by the shipping agent has been received and acknowledged.
2	There are three longitudinal main public routes along the coast of Zhejiang. Please navigate to the right within the routes.
3	When entering waters with dense fishing vessels, it is recommended to add 2 additional navigational watch-keeping personnel.
4	Off the coast of China, "ZheXyu 12345" generally denotes a fishing vessel, while "ZheXyu 12345-1" generally denotes fishing nets.
5	If a fishing vessel sails at a speed of approximately 3 knots, it should generally be judged that the fishing vessel is engaged in fishing operations; please keep clear and stay away.
6	When avoiding fishing vessels, a safe distance of more than 1 nautical mile should usually be maintained.
7	Once the encounter distance with a fishing vessel is less than 1 nautical mile, it is recommended to immediately take measures such as VHF calls, whistle alerts, and light signals to remind the fishing vessel to keep away.
8	If a fishing vessel flashes the merchant vessel's bridge repeatedly with laser lights or other lights, it is generally a reminder for the merchant ship to take the initiative to avoid it.
9	Any alteration of course and/or speed to avoid collision shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, be large enough to be readily apparent to another vessel observing visually or by radar; a succession of small alterations of course and/or speed should be avoided.
10	After passing a fishing vessel at close range, the safety status of the fishing vessel should be checked.

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Notice on Strengthening the Prevention of Collisions between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in Coastal Waters of China

Following the Spring Festival holiday, coastal waters of China will enter the spring fishing season. The number of fishing vessels will increase sharply, resulting in dense encounters between merchant ships and fishing vessels and a significant rise in collision risks. To further prevent collisions between merchant ships and fishing vessels and ensure navigation safety, the following suggestions are hereby put forward.

1. Strengthen Shore-based Monitoring and Guidance

1.1 Implement 24-hour shore-based watchkeeping, strengthen dynamic monitoring of your ships, and promptly receive early warning information issued by competent authorities on waters with dense fishing vessels, high-risk waters, and concentrated entry or exit of fishing vessels. Guide your ships to conduct thorough pre-voyage risk assessments, focusing on verifying voyage plans, collision-prevention measures and watchkeeping arrangements in fishing areas.

1.2 When developing voyage plans, full reference should be made to documents, including the *Guidelines for Coastal Public Shipping Routes*, the *Notice of the Maritime Safety Administration of the People's Republic of China on Promulgating High-risk Warning Zones for Collisions between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in Coastal Waters of China*, and the *Guidelines for the Prevention of Collisions between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in Coastal Waters of China*, to plan reasonable routes and specify collision-prevention measures.

2. Enhance Navigation Safety

2.1 Ships navigating through coastal waters of China should develop sound voyage plans, keep routes as far away from fishing areas and major fishing grounds as possible, and use recommended routes wherever practicable. During navigation watch handover, a complete handover should be made including the movements of surrounding merchant ships and fishing vessels, as well as all threats to navigation safety. Watch handover should only be carried out after collision-prevention operations are completed and the ship has passed and cleared the other vessel.

2.2 Before entering areas with dense fishing vessels in coastal waters of China, a navigation safety meeting should be convened to clarify navigation requirements. When navigating in waters with dense fishing vessels, ships should strengthen bridge watchkeeping manpower, with at least two watchkeeping officers on the bridge. The master should take command when necessary. When navigating in fishing areas at night, the master should issue night orders specifying safe navigation requirements.

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2.3 Before entering fishing areas, inspect and test navigation and GMDSS equipment, emergency power supply, navigation lights, daylight signalling lights, and other sound signalling equipment. Ensure that the main engine(s) and that the auxiliary sources of power are in good working condition, inspected and ready for immediate use. Test manual steering (follow-up, non-follow-up), automatic steering and emergency steering to ensure the steering system functions properly for emergency collision avoidance manoeuvre.

2.4 When taking measures to avoid collision with fishing vessels, on the premise of ensuring the ship's own navigation safety, exercise good seamanship to take early and positive action to keep clear of fishing vessels, so as to avoid the close-quarters situation. The minimum distance at closest point of approach (CPA) should be kept at no less than 1 nautical mile. Use VHF Channel 16, ship's whistle and lights to carry out early communication and warning with fishing vessels.

2.5 When giving way to fishing vessels engaged in fishing operations, maintain a sufficient safe distance from both the vessels and their fishing nets. When passing a trawler, keep a distance of no less than 1 nautical mile from its stern. Crossing between pair trawlers is prohibited. When passing fishing vessels engaged in seining operation, keep a safe distance to windward and upstream of the vessel.

3. Emergency Response and Rescue

3.1 In a close-quarters situation, take decisive evasive actions such as slowing down, stopping, reversing, and altering course to avoid bow-on collision with the side of fishing vessels, to minimize collision consequences.

3.2 In the event of a collision, prioritize the rescue of human life and adopt all possible measures to rescue persons in distress. Immediately report to the nearest maritime administration through all effective means, including the location of the incident, name of the vessel in distress, casualties, ship damage, weather and sea conditions, and rescue needs. Meanwhile, notify surrounding vessels and request their assistance in rescue operations.

4. Other Important Notices

4.1 Fishing vessels engaged in drift netting, stow netting, and cage fishing usually use fishing net position AIS locator to indicate fishing nets, which appear as triangular symbols on ECDIS. Fishing net position AIS locator may affect watchkeepers' judgment of shipborne AIS, ECDIS and radar information, requiring special attention and identification.

4.2 Fishing vessels engaged in fishing operations may fail to exhibit appropriate lights and shapes in accordance with regulations. Keep clear of low-speed fishing vessels, which may be operating, anchored or adrift, possibly with improper watchkeeping or switched-off VHF / AIS equipment. Some wooden fishing vessels may be difficult to be detected by radar due to their material and structure.

4.3 Fishing vessels may suddenly alter course or increase speed to protect their fishing nets. Enhanced lookout is required.

4.4 Foreign ships communicating with fishing vessels via VHF in coastal waters of China should fully consider language barriers.

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