

Guidance on the safe navigation of the Hidrovía

The Club has recently recorded several collision incidents in narrow channels and bends of the Hidrovía, South America. During investigations, it has been identified that a common contributing factor to such incidents is the position of the vessel whilst performing passing manoeuvres. In line with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 (COLREGs) or local regulations (REGINAVE), vessels involved in these collisions had been travelling on the incorrect side of the channel.

As a result, and in collaboration with ConsulMar S.R.L, the Club has compiled advice which aims to remind Members of the correct conduct for vessels navigating the Hidrovía.

[REGINAVE 301.0302](#). Special provisions for navigation on inland rivers notes that:

a) In river sites where due to turns, narrowing or intersection of two or more waterways in which the approach of the vessels navigating in them could be dangerous, the following rules shall be followed: 1. If the possibility of crossing is apparent, the ship sailing against the current must regulate its speed until the other ship has completed its crossing manoeuvre and cleared the dangerous bend or narrow. At which time the vessel can continue its voyage. These precautions must take into account the extended time required when it comes to long-haul convoys.

Thus, at narrows or bends at which crossing could lead to a close quarter's situation, the vessel travelling with the current has the preference. The vessel navigating against the current should stop or regulate its speed until the other vessel has cleared the bend or narrow. If the vessel sailing against the current does not regulate its speed to allow the vessel sailing with the current to manoeuvre and become steady on its course before passing, it would be in contravention of the local regulation, exposing itself to a higher level of risk and potential liability in the event of a collision.

In addition, in the Hidrovía it is usual to experience strong currents and steep rising contours at the edge of the navigable channels. These channel edges, due to the action of the current, are susceptible to changing position and shape. This increases the risk of losing control of the vessel due to the effects of the interaction and the possibility of the vessel touching bottom when navigating too close to the edge of the channel.

The Captain of the vessel sailing against the current must be prudent and observe good seamanship when determining the place where they will pass the vessel sailing with the current. Waiting on the port side of the channel is reserved for very particular situations and, if such a situation arises, the decision to wait on the port side must be communicated to and agreed with the vessel sailing with the current. In all events, communications must be clear and concise and

all proceeding actions must be agreed by the other vessel. Section 3.3 of [ORDENANZA N° 4/00 \(DPSN\)](#) describes the communication requirements for passing manoeuvres.

Further to establishing the requirements outlined in REGINAVE, the relevant parts of the COLREGs stipulate:

Rule 6 Safe Speed

In summary, when determining a safe speed the following factors shall be among those taken into account by all vessels: (iii) The maneuverability of the vessel with special reference to stopping distance and turning ability in the prevailing conditions.

Rule 8 Action to Avoid Collision

(a) Any action taken to avoid collision shall be taken in accordance with the Rules of this Part and shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, be positive, made in ample time and with due regard to the observance of good seamanship. (f) (i) A vessel which, by any of these Rules, is required not to impede the passage or safe passage of another vessel shall, when required by the circumstances of the case, take early action to allow sufficient sea-room for the safe passage of the other vessel.

Rule 9 Narrow Channel

(a) A vessel proceeding along the course of a narrow channel or fairway shall keep as near to the outer limit or the channel or fairway which lies on her starboard side as is safe and practicable.

Rule 16 Action by the Give Way Vessel

Every vessel which is directed to keep out of the way of another vessel shall, so far as possible, take early and substantial action to keep well clear.

Members are able to use the Prefectura Naval Argentina [Ordenanza Maritima 1/82](#) as a reference for general safety and for the rules of tugs pushing convoys. Finally the Club would also like to draw Member's attention to the Prefectura Naval Argentina [Ordenanza Maritima 1/82](#) which should be used as reference for general safety for the rules of tugs pushing convoys.

We thank ConsulMar S.R.L for their valuable contribution to this bulletin.