

Importance of proper passage planning

Despite the ongoing discussion in the shipping industry regarding the importance of comprehensive passage planning over multiple years, the Club continues to observe countless incidents across the industry that can be largely attributed to either improper or non-existent passage planning.

Planning a proper passage should be carried out by all vessels, although the extent of such planning would depend on a number of factors, including the vessel type, size, area and nature of operation. Whilst SOLAS/V/34 refers to aspects of passage planning, reference may be made to applicable equivalent local laws for similar guidance for vessels to which SOLAS may not apply.

Based on results from the [Condition Survey Programme](#) and internal investigations into relevant claims, the Club has identified the following aspects as frequently lacking in proper passage planning:

- Navigational charts not up to date
- Improper use of Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS)
- Lack of knowledge on ECDIS safety features
- Lack of clarity on primary and secondary means of navigation (refer [1/Circ. 1496](#))
- Courses not laid out on the charts
- Vessel's position not tracked / marked at suitable intervals
- 'NO-GO Areas' not marked on the charts
- Inoperative navigational and/or weather monitoring equipment
- Inadequate assessment of weather

It is important that a comprehensive 'berth to berth' passage plan is prepared by a competent person and agreed upon prior to the commencement of the voyage. Members are encouraged to incorporate elements of passage planning in their [Management Systems](#) and provide relevant information to the crew.

We would like to remind Members that as a minimum, the following aspects should be incorporated in a passage plan for every voyage as appropriate:

- True courses and distances
- Methods and frequency of position fixing
- Alter course and wheel-over positions
- Margins of safety for each leg
- 'NO-GO Areas'
- Abort Points / Point of 'No-Return'

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- Wrecks and hazards in proximity of intended course line
 - Radar conspicuous objects (mark only the ones that are useful)
 - Parallel indexing information
 - Reporting positions for Vessel Traffic Information System
 - Pilot Boarding Area
 - High density traffic areas
 - Weather assessment and monitoring
 - Static and Dynamic drafts
 - Minimum Under Keel Clearance (UKC)
 - Air draft
 - Effect of tides and currents
 - Notes covering any useful/ relevant local information and regulatory restrictions.

Additionally, for vessels with ECDIS as one of the means of navigation (whether primary or secondary):

- Safety contour and safety depth settings for each leg of the voyage
- Entered course leg settings (Cross Track Limit, guard zone)
- Optimum utilisation of 'Route check' function

The basics of passage planning do not differ when carried out on an ECDIS. There are substantial safety benefits to using ECDIS as means of navigation, provided the users are suitably trained and the ECDIS is set up properly. Members may refer to the [ECDIS – Guidance for Good Practice](#) (MSC.1/Circ.1503/Rev.2)) as issued by the IMO for further guidance to ensure safe and effective use of ECDIS.

The Club would also wish to highlight the IMO's [Guidelines for Voyage Planning](#) wherein various stages of passage planning have been explained in considerable detail.

We welcome all feedback on this article or any other Loss Prevention guidance. Please feel free to contact the [Loss Prevention team](#) should you have any further queries on this matter.