
Prevention of Collisions – Chinese Coastal Waters

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Safety Alert is issued by The Bahamas Maritime Authority to share recent guidelines purported to be issued by The Maritime Safety Administration of the People's Republic of China on the prevention of collisions between merchant ships and fishing vessels in Chinese coastal waters. It is issued in advance of the summer fishing ban lifting on 16 August 2021.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Collisions between merchant ships and fishing vessels and fishing fleet support vessels in Chinese coastal waters continue to result in a large number of fatalities. Two collisions involving Bahamian ships resulted in 24 fatalities in 2018-2019.
- 2.2. The attached guidelines should be read by the operators and bridge teams of any Bahamian vessel planning a passage through the Taiwan Strait, East China Sea or Yellow Sea.

3. Lessons to be learned from previous casualties

- 3.1. Passage planning - probable traffic conditions should be risk assessed and critical areas identified as part of the appraisal. Effective control measures could include adjusting the passage to avoid high traffic areas, planning work to make senior watchkeepers available on the bridge for the transit of high risk areas or strategic use of the time available to reduce speed on high risk legs.
- 3.2. Bridge resources - watchkeepers should be aware of the function of all available tools to assess risk of collision and support decision making.
- 3.3. Navigating in dense traffic - if documented procedures such as reducing speed or maintaining minimum CPA are not applied consistently, perceived risk can reduce resulting in greater risk taking.
- 3.4. Action to avoid collision - needs to be early, substantial and easily seen by another vessel. Use of the appropriate sound signal helps clarify the action being taken and visually monitoring the effectiveness of action taken is vital.
- 3.5. Near miss or collision? - if there is any indication that a collision has occurred, it is essential to find out conclusively and render assistance as required.

4. Further reading

Expected rise in the number of fishing vessels in Chinese waters – Update

www.gard.no/web/updates/content/30219828/expected-rise-in-the-number-of-fishing-vessels-in-chinese-waters-update

Collision between Polar Spirit and Zhe Xiang Yu 41020

www.bahamasmaritime.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BMA-Investigation-Report-Collision-between-Polar-Spirit-and-Zhe-Xiang-Yu-41020.pdf

Collision between APL Southampton and Zhe Ling Yu 52035

www.mot.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/collision-between-apl-southampton-and-fishing-vessel-on-15-mar-2018.pdf

5. Validity

- 5.1. This Safety Alert is valid until further notice.

SAFETY GUIDLINE FOR PREVENTING OF COLLISION BETWEEN MERCHANT VESSELS AND FISHING VESSELS IN CHINESE COASTAL WATERS

All relevant vessels:

Due to the existence of many fishing vessels and the complicated hydrometeorological conditions, which have caused frequent collisions between merchant ships and fishing vessels in the China's coastal waters, China MSA provides the following advice for the purpose of navigation safety:

1. Normal Navigational Methods

1.1 Before entering the waters where fishing vessels are concentrated

1.1.1 The captain should examine passage plan, as far as practicable adopt the recommended route and try the best to avoid entering the fishing vessels concentrated waters, so as to reduce the chance of encountering with fishing vessels.

1.1.2 Examine and test navigational aids and communication equipment such as RADAR, ECDIS/ECS, AIS, VDR, VHF, Navigational lights and sound-signalling equipment to ensure that all are in sound working condition.

1.1.3 Make proper arrangement on navigational watch. There should be at least 2 crew members engaged on the bridgeward at all times.

1.1.4 Safety precautions and corresponding actions guide for navigating in the fishing area should be clearly posted at a prominent position on the bridge.

1.2 Navigating in or approaching to the waters where fishing vessels are concentrated

1.2.1 It should be borne in mind that: Safety First, Don't take risks, Take a detour! As far as practicable avoid entering the waters where fishing vessels are concentrated.

1.2.2 Appropriate bridge watch arrangement shall be made. The number of bridge team may be increased according to the high traffic density of fishing vessels. Don't hesitate to call the captain to the bridge any time indoubt.

1.2.3 The captain should issue the night orders in response to the special precautionary requirements for the safe navigation in fishing area at the night time.

1.2.4 Bridge should keep sharp look-out, use two or more radars by long-range and short-range scanning. Do not rely too much on a single navigational aids, every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

1.2.5 Proceed at a safe speed at all times.

1.2.6 Make sure the AIS information is updated and the device is in good working condition.

1.2.7 All measures shall be taken to avoid watchkeepers to work in fatigue or after drinking .

1.3 Special Precautions

1.3.1 When the summer fishing moratorium ends, usually it is the time when the density of fishing vessels is highest.

1.3.2 Based on accident statistics, most collisions between merchant vessels and fishing vessels occur in the period between 2300 and 0400. Therefore special attention should be given in this duration.

1.3.3 Special attention should also be paid to some fishing vessels anchored at night which might not arrange watchkeeper or display proper lights or have operational AIS as required, and also to the interference from the excessive use of AIS on fishing nets or fishing marks.

1.3.4 When a fishing vessel is observed proceeding at the speed around 3 knots, she is possibly engaged in fishing and restricted in her ability to manoeuvre, keep clear at a safe distance whenever possible.

1.3.5 Even a slight collision or contact between a merchant vessel and a fishing vessel might capsize the fishing vessel and cause subsequent damage to both the vessel and her crew. However it is sometimes hard to be observed by watchkeepers on merchant vessels. Therefore, When passing a fishing vessel at close range, great care should be taken to ensure that there is no collision, wave damage or vessel suction..

1.3.6 It is recommended that vessels sailing from the southern parts of

the South China Sea to Japanese or Korean ports, and vessels that do not call at Chinese ports, proceed from the waters east of Taiwan Island and try to stay away from the coastal waters of China..

2. Action to Avoid Collision

2.1 Comply with the COLREG 1972. Any action to avoid collision shall be taken in ample time. The alteration of course and/or speed shall be large enough. Action taken to avoid collision shall be such as to result in passing at a safe distance until the other vessel is past and clear. Try to coordinate the collision avoidance actions through VHF CH16; however if there is no response from the fishing vessel after several calls, it might mean that the fishing vessel does not maintain listening watch on such channel. When communicating with VHF, give a full consideration to the limitations of accent and language expression and ensure that both parties are clear about their intentions.

2.2 Watch out for uncoordinated actions taken by fishing vessels at close range. When finding a fishing vessel that needs emergency collision avoidance actions, give at least 5 short and rapid flashes by ALDIS light, or use a continuous sound signal to attract her attention.

2.3 In an emergency situation, you should also consider reducing speed or stopping the vessel to avoid collision in addition to the alteration of course.

2.4 Action to avoid collision should be decided giving full consideration to the surrounding conditions, so that such action will not result in any close-quarter situations with any other vessels.

3. Emergency Rescue

3.1 When a collision is unavoidable, it should be avoided as far as possible that the bow of your own vessel is heading to the fishing vessel.

3.2 The vessel should be stopped immediately after a collision. Life-saving rescue should be put at first priority and all endeavors shall be made to carry out the on-site rescue as long as your own safety is not severely threatened. It is strictly forbidden to give up search and rescue and leave the scene without authorization. Such behavior at sea means giving up the lives of others and will face severe punishment by law! Aided by the modern technology, almost all hit-and-run ships will be tracked down.

3.3 Immediately call the vessels in the vicinity to attend to the rescue operations.

3.4 By all effective means, report to the nearest competent authority immediately. The content of such report should include the location of the accident, the name of the vessel in distress, casualties, damage, weather and sea conditions, rescue needs, etc..

Every crew member on navigational duty should be familiar with the above information.