
Acceptance of Electronic Chart Plotting Systems for Fishing Vessels Under 24 metres and Small Vessels in Commercial Use (Code Boats) Up To 24 Metres Load Line Length.

Notice to all Manufacturers, Equipment Suppliers, Owners, Skippers and Watchkeepers of Fishing Vessels and Masters of Small Vessels in Commercial Use

This notice replaces MGN 262

PLEASE NOTE:- Where this document provides guidance on the law it should not be regarded as definitive. The way the law applies to any particular case can vary according to circumstances - for example, from vessel to vessel and you should consider seeking independent legal advice if you are unsure of your own legal position.

Summary

Key Points

- The MCA will accept electronic chart plotting systems complying with the specifications developed by the Sea Fish Industry Authority (SFIA).
- Manufacturers, or their agents, will be required to provide a signed statement, a certified copy of which must be kept on board the vessel.
- To satisfy the statutory requirements vessels must comply with these standards, including the provision of suitable back up arrangements which are provided in outline.
- Electronic chart plotting systems conforming to the SFIA specifications are not a substitute for approved Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) and they are not accepted for use other than prescribed in this notice.

1. Introduction/ Background

1.1 There is widespread use of chart plotting systems using privately produced electronic chart data. Such systems do not satisfy the international carriage requirements for charts. Nonetheless, it is in the interest of navigational safety that mariners are able to maximise the benefits obtained from modern electronic systems.

HM Treasury has funded a project, with the Sea Fish Industry Authority (SFIA) as the lead authority, for the development of technical specifications for an electronic chart system.

This would primarily be for use on UK-registered fishing vessels under 24m in length. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) takes the view that this specification is also suitable for various small vessels in commercial use (Code Vessels) up to 24 metres load line length.

2. Carriage Requirements

2.1 The chart carriage requirements are specified in the following documents, or any document amending or replacing them:

(a) Fishing vessels - *Merchant Shipping Notice No. 1770(F) Code of Safe Working Practices for the Construction and use of 15 metre overall to less than 24 metres registered length fishing vessels - Paragraph 9.4.3.3.*

(b) Small Vessels in Commercial Use - *Code of Practice for sport or pleasure, workboat and pilot boats (MGN 280) – Section 19.*

3. The Acceptance Process

3.1 To meet any statutory chart carriage requirements for under 24m fishing vessels and small commercial vessels, the MCA will accept electronic chart plotting systems complying with the specifications developed by SFIA. Copies of the specifications are available from Sea Fish Industry Authority, Sea Fish House, St. Andrews Dock, Hull HU3 4QE

4. Satisfying Statutory Requirements

4.1 To identify acceptable systems, manufacturers, or their agents, will be required to provide a signed statement to be included with each electronic chart plotting system stating that the system fully conforms to the SFIA technical specification. This statement, or a certified copy, must to be kept on board the vessel.

4.2 As proof that onboard equipment is manufactured to the SFIA specification, MCA Surveyors may ask to see it during surveys or inspections. MCA Surveyors may also require verification that the electronic chart plotting system is being used with suitable Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs). If, ENCs have not been published by the National Hydrographic Office for a specific geographical area, then approved Raster Navigational Charts (RNCs) may be used for the intended areas of operation. In either case, charts must be kept up-to date.

4.3 To satisfy the statutory requirements vessels must comply with these standards, including the provision of suitable backup arrangements.

5. Backup Arrangements

5.1 Details of acceptable backup arrangements are contained in the SFIA specifications. In outline these are: -

- a) a second acceptable Electronic Chart Plotting System; or
- b) a portable computer or similar device which will provide sufficient up-to-date electronic navigational chart information and navigation facilities for the vessel to navigate to a safe haven; or
- c) a selection of paper charts, corrected up-to-date, sufficient for the vessel to navigate to a safe haven.

6. Systems found not to be in compliance with the SFIA specifications.

6.1 These fall in to two categories: -

1) Systems supplied that are subsequently found not to be in compliance with the SFIA specification, as declared by the supplier and/or system manufacturer.

2) Systems that are found on survey or inspection not to display correctly the ENC's and/or RNC's of the intended areas, or such charts have not been kept corrected and up-to-date, or the system is using unofficial electronic charts that have not been authorised or issued by the National Hydrographic Office.

7. Caution

7.1 Users of these systems should note the following points:

1. Whilst there is a statutory requirement for under 24m fishing vessels and small vessels in commercial service to carry "charts", there is no statutory requirement for the carriage of electronic chart systems;
2. Electronic chart plotting systems conforming to the SFIA specifications are not a substitute for approved Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) and they are not accepted for use other than as prescribed in this notice;
3. Only electronic charts (ENCs or RNCs), authorised or issued by / or on the authority of a Government, authorised Hydrographic Office or other relevant government institution, are acceptable for use in such systems to satisfy statutory carriage requirements.

More Information

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