

OFFSHORE INSTALLATIONS—OBSERVANCE OF SAFETY ZONES**Notice to Shipowners, Masters, Officers and Seamen of Merchant Ships
and Other Sea-going Vessels and to Owners, Skippers and Crews of
Fishing Vessels**

1. The attention of mariners is drawn to the 500 metre safety zones established around offshore oil and gas installations on the United Kingdom Continental Shelf. It is an offence, under Section 23(1) of the Petroleum Act 1987, to enter a safety zone except under the circumstances outlined in paragraph 5 below.
2. Safety zones exist not only to protect mariners by reducing the risk of collision but also to protect the lives and property of those working in the oil and gas industry, (divers and submersible vehicles are particularly vulnerable), and to reduce the risk of damage to the marine environment.
3. Under the Petroleum Act 1987 all oil and gas installations which project above the sea surface at any state of the tide are automatically protected by a safety zone.
4. Safety zones for subsea installations are established by Statutory Instrument in the form of Offshore Installations (Safety Zones) Orders, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The existence of safety zones established by these Orders is promulgated by Admiralty Notices to Mariners, Radio Navigational Warnings and Fisheries Departments' fortnightly bulletins. Safety zones around subsea installations are invariably marked by light buoys on the surface laid as closely as practicable to the centre of the zone.
5. Safety zones can only be entered under the following conditions:
 - (i) With the consent of the Secretary of State, or a person authorised by him;
 - (ii) To lay, test, inspect, repair, alter, renew or remove a submarine cable or pipe-line;
 - (iii) To provide services for an installation within the zone or to transport persons to or from it, or under authorisation of a government department to inspect it;
 - (iv) For a general lighthouse authority vessel to perform duties relating to the safety of navigation;
 - (v) To save life or property, owing to stress of weather or when in distress.
6. Entry into a safety zone by an unauthorised vessel makes the owner,

master and others who have contributed to the offence liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £2,000 at the present time, and on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years, or to a fine or to both.

7. Development areas are certain fields, marked on Admiralty Charts which are being developed or are currently producing oil or gas. Within these areas there are likely to be construction and maintenance vessels, including submarine craft, divers and obstructions possibly marked by buoys. Supply vessels and, in some cases, tankers, frequently manoeuvre within these fields. Mariners are strongly advised to keep outside such areas.

8. Vessels which are transiting or passing close to areas of offshore activity should navigate with care through or near these areas giving due consideration to safe speed and safe passing distances, taking into account the prevailing weather conditions and the presence of other vessels or dangers. A continuous listening watch should be maintained on VHF channel 16 when navigating in or near areas where offshore activities are taking place.

9. It is important for the safety of all those working in the hostile environment offshore that mariners respect the safety zones around offshore installations by keeping clear of them at all times. Mariners are advised always to assume the existence of a safety zone unless they have information to the contrary.

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