1. Document Revisions

**IALA Guideline No. ####**

**On**

**VTS Support and interaction with allied and other services**

**Edition 1**

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Revisions to the IALA Document are to be noted in the table prior to the issue of a revised document.

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# introduction

**Preamble**

A vessel traffic service (VTS) is recognised as a valuable asset to help prevent incidents resulting from vessel traffic. This contributes to sustaining the safety and efficiency of maritime traffic, and protecting the marine environment. Consequently, VTS plays an important role is risk management, not only in maritime traffic but also in the continuity of the maritime transport chain.

The role of VTS is well established and its services are well positioned in the maritime domain. However, this Guideline has a broad perspective, to help VTS authorities in their interaction between with other services, outside the maritime domain. For example, a request for the provision of vessel or maritime traffic related information in order to support services in the maritime transport chain to help sustain community services. Also in the maritime domain, VTS information may be needed to support other servicessuch as maritime security or environmental agencies, with whom the VTS Authority may not have had previous interaction. The possible stakeholders who may wish or need to collaborate with the VTS Authority need to be identified. Also present legislation, guidelines and manuals are to be studied in order to identify the limitations on possible VTS support to allied and other services, identify inconsistencies with legislation, guidelines and manuals and determine any modifications necessary..

**Objective**

This Guideline describes the issues to be considered and the principles to be respected for successful interaction and co-operation between a VTS and allied and other services.

Interaction with allied services may be established on a continuous basis, such as in law enforcement and regulatory compliance, or could be temporary, such as in emergency situations, SAR and disaster management. Interaction with other services can also be on a continuous basis or temporary basis, and may include interaction with stakeholders outside the maritime domain.

# Acronyms and definitions

Maritime domain: is used as a generic term covering:

* all geographical areas (ocean, sea, coastal waters, harbour approaches, inland waters or all

other navigable waterways),structures in, on, under or bordering these areas;

* all aspects of maritime infrastructure in mentioned geographical areas (e.g. waterways, locks, bridges, specific traffic management arrangements);
* all activities between stakeholders relating to and/or adjacent to safety and efficiency of

shipping, security onboard and ashore and the protection of the marine environment;

* waterborne transport of people and cargo and its handling; and
* the all people within this domain.

Allied service: A service in the maritime domain, other than VTS, that share part of or the same aims as VTS, such as maritime safety or protection of the marine environment..

Other service: Refer to the use of VTS data to assist authorities or organisations pursuing other objectives to more effectively undertake their work (e.g. ensuring local security or preventing illegal imports).

Primary services: The basic Vessel Traffic Services: Information Service (INS), Navigational Assistance (NAS) en Traffic Organizational (TOS)

Secondary services: Any other service from the VTS Authoritythat contributes to its mission.

Single Window: Within the context of UN/CEFACT recommendation 33[[1]](#footnote-1), a Single Window is defined as a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. If information is electronic, then individual data elements should only be submitted once

# Allied and other services

Support from VTS may differ according to the purpose of this support. Some examples are given below.

**Security**

Through routine VTS operations and interaction with maritime traffic, VTS operators are aware of the situation and circumstances in the VTS area, and may be in a position to detect and report events out of the ordinary.

Though much has been written about Maritime Security in all relevant documents, there is no existing definition. SOLAS Chapter XI only provides a definition on Security Incident:

“Security incident means any suspicious act or circumstance threatening the security of a ship, including a mobile offshore drilling unit and a high-speed craft, or of a port facility or of any ship/port interface or any ship-to-ship activity.”

VTS may assist security assessments through:

* VTS in-depth knowledge of port and waterway infrastructure and its critical and vulnerable locations;
* VTS real-time knowledge of vessel activity, including scheduled movements, vessel locations and intentions;
* VTS in-depth knowledge of regular port operations, including vessel routes, activities and port stakeholders;

Regular and continuous communications with vessel or vessel operators in case a vessel is denied access to a port or restricted area for security reasons, the VTS may determine a safe anchorage, holding area or designated route. The VTS may communicate this information to the vessel and to the appropriate security authority, and monitor the vessel’s status while anchored or in the holding area, or its progress and compliance to the designated route.

**Safety and protection of the marine environment**

Prevention of intentional harm to vessels, waterways and infrastructure will contribute to the safety of personnel, vessels, cargo, and to the protection of the marine environment and of investments in port- or waterway infrastructure.

**Efficiency of maritime traffic**

Next to the support given by the primary services of VTS to improving safety and the fluency of maritime traffic, support from VTS may also contribute to efficient information management in the maritime transport chain. For instance, when information and data contained in or captured by the VTS database is made available for re-use in a Single Window environment, multiple reporting and processing of the same information or data for different stakeholders can be avoided.(e.g., notice of arrival to coastguard, customs, immigration, etc.).

It should be noted that it is important to avoid confusion between allied services and the services provided by a VTS.

# Criteria for VTS to contribute to allied and other services

Where possible, VTS co-operation with allied or other services should be based on following principles:

* There should be a clear need for VTS information to be used for allied or other services;
* The support and interaction should not affect the integrity of the services concerned[[2]](#footnote-2)
* The co-operation should be based on an arrangement that clearly states: The scope of the co-operation, the data and information exchanged, the purpose for (re)use of the data and information, and an external procedure with the operational details;
* The temporal details of the co-operation (when it is commencing and finishing);
* The mechanism or protocol that triggers the co-operation if it is temporary. Also the same when co-operation should finish;
* The mandatory or voluntary character of such co-operation; and
* Legal considerations and constraints should be taken into account when the co-operation arrangement is being established.

.A vital part of any modern integrated surveillance or traffic information system is the capability to predict the future traffic image. The VTS systems are in many cases capable of many user functionalities for example:

* Import of voyage information;
* Export of the general traffic image that is manually connectable to the voyage information;
* Export of the situation picture with the vessels automatically connected to the available voyage information;
* Capability to automatically connect vessels to the available route information and
* Export of ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival) and ETD (Estimated Time of Departure) information.

This capability of VTS systems can create value to allied and other services, even to satisfy business needs from stakeholders which are normally not associated with the primary services of VTS. Nevertheless, the VTS Authority may choose to respond to those business needs, as long as the above mentioned principles underlying the interaction, are respected.

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# Identification of possible stakeholders

Three separate types of stakeholders interacting with VTS are defined:

Shipside: Stakeholders aboard vessels; e.g. master of the vessel

Shoreside 1: Stakeholders ashore who interact directly with vessel traffic;

e.g. VTS Authorities, Port Authorities, Coastguard centres, Ships Reporting Systems;

Shoreside 2: Stakeholders ashore who interact indirectly with vessel traffic; parties assigned with other public responsibilities, such as:

National administrations, customs, border control, Port State Control, shipping inspection, and parties within the private domain such as shipping owners, agents, stevedores, terminal operators and other associated business

In addition to the given examples above, VTS may become involved, if not already, in the exchange of traffic related information with state, provincial or local government and associated agencies, for purposes unfamiliar to the maritime domain; Such as monitoring emissions from shipping, securing vital supply chains for society and assess the risks associated with maritime transport of dangerous or polluting cargo close to coastal or port communities.

# Legal aspects and constraints

IALA Guideline 1086 on the global sharing of maritime data & information (June 2012) already provides valuable guidance on the legal aspects. The following is intended to supplement that Guideline.

There are a range of potential legal aspects and constraints that could affect the merit of and ability to use VTS information for allied and other purposes. The nature of these will vary between different countries. Factors that will create and influence these differences may include but are not limited to:

* Type of Governmental institutions;
* Types of legal systems;
* Specific national or provincial legislation on information access and protection of private information;
* Inter-agency arrangements;
* Commercial interests associated with sharing information and data;
* Government policies; and
* possible involvement of private business entities as collectors or potential recipients of VTS information.

Within each country, the legal and policy issues may also vary for different uses of VTS information. For example, there may be a policy or legal position that information will only be released for a limited range of specific functions. VTS information may also be more readily available for functions performed by groups that are part of the same agency as the VTS authority.

VTS authorities should also consider the purpose of any re-use of VTS information and how that influences the form and time in which information may be provided. For example, information to alert or assist search and rescue operations would generally be required freely and urgently. Other uses, such as compiling data on past shipping trends, could be provided at a later time, perhaps affording sufficient time for a formal written application.

In many cases, the objectives of the Act or high level legislation under which the VTS operates may determine how it may be re-used. If a VTS authority is part of an agency whose objectives include safety at sea and protection of the marine environment, it may be easier to provide information to organisations undertaking similar or complementary work such as marine parks and fisheries management. Another issue in some countries may be whether the eventual use of the transferred information is consistent with the purpose for which it was originally collected. This issue may be solved by clearly describing and specifying the purpose for which the data is collected in the first place from the outset.

Transfer and sharing of data & information, particularly between government agencies, should be based upon an agreement, memorandum of understanding or similar instrument between the VTS authority and the organisation requiring the data. It is also recommended that VTS authorities develop clear protocols and procedures so that data transfer is implemented and maintained consistently and correctly.

The type and format of information supplied by the VTS authority may influence the extent of its distribution. Aggregated information on shipping movement trends may be more readily and widely distributed than information that identifies individual vessels.

In many countries, specific legal instruments may override other general policies. Examples of such instruments include search warrants and court orders.

Where VTS information may need to be used for evidence purposes, VTS authorities should consider data collection and storage protocols that will safeguard the information & data’s security and handling continuity to protect the information & data’s admissibility as evidence in court.

If more than one agency or country contributes to the collection of information supplied to a VTS authority, the question of data ownership and transfer policy may need to be jointly resolved. All VTS authorities should also consider the issue of protocols for any subsequent transfer of information from the recipient organisation to third parties.

# REferences

SOLAS Regulation V-12 Vessel Traffic Services

IMO Resolution A.857(20) Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services

IMO MSC-MEPC.7 / Circ.7 Guidance on near-miss reporting

IALA Recommendation V-127 on Operational Procedures for Vessel Traffic Services

IALA Guideline 1086 (2012); the global sharing of maritime data & information

IALA VTS Manual (2008)

1. UN/CEFACT recommendation (33) and Guidelines on establishing a Single Window to enhance the efficient exchange of information between trade and government [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This includes the integrity of the technical infrastructure and systems used in the interaction. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)