VTS46-5.1.3 Revised-New Resolution - Version 2

**GUIDELINES FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES**

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HAVING CONSIDERED the recommendation made by the Maritime Safety Committee at its one hundredth session,

1. ADOPTS the revised Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services set out in the Annex to the present resolution;

2. INVITES Governments to take account of the annexed Guideline when planning, implementing and operating a vessel traffic service in accordance with SOLAS regulation V/12;

3. RECOMMENDS Governments to encourage masters of ships navigating in an area for which a vessel traffic service is provided to make use of such a service;

4. ENCOURAGES Governments that operate vessel traffic services to consider technical and other developments recognized by the Organization relating to vessel traffic services;

5. REQUESTS the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of all Contracting Governments to the SOLAS Convention and to Members of the Organization which are not Contracting Governments to the Convention;

4. REVOKES resolution A.857(20).

ANNEX

**GUIDELINES FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 These guidelines are associated with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS) regulation V/12 and should be complied with when planning, implementing and operating a vessel traffic service under national law**.**

1.2 In complying with these guidelines Contracting Governments, or Governments should take account of applicable IMO instruments and relevant International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) Standards [see Section 7].

1.3 [Pending - possible additional paragraph proposed by the Netherlands to strengthen link between IMO and IALA as in Section 7)]

1.4 These guidelines provide the framework for the consistent and harmonized delivery of Vessel Traffic Services worldwide.

**2 DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS**

The following terms are used in connection with a vessel traffic service:

* 1. ***Vessel traffic service (VTS)*** - a service implemented by a Government/Competent authority with the capability to interact with vessel traffic and respond to developing situations within a VTS area to improve the safety and efficiency of navigation, safety of life at sea and to support the protection of the environment.
  2. ***Competent authority*** - the authority made legally responsible by the Government for Vessel Traffic Services.
  3. ***VTS provider***- the organization / entity legally empowered by the Government / Competent authority for the provision of VTS.
  4. ***VTS area*** - the delineated, formally declared area for which the VTS provider is legally empowered to deliver a VTS.
  5. ***VTS personnel*** - persons performing tasks associated with VTS, trained in VTS operations and holding qualifications as appropriate.
  6. ***Allied services*** – services, other than VTS, supporting vessel traffic.

**3 REGULATORY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

3.1 Under the general provisions of treaty law and of IMO conventions, Contracting Governments are responsible for promulgating laws and regulations and for taking all other steps which may be necessary to give those instruments full and complete effect.

3.2 Vessel Traffic Services are recognised internationally as a navigational safety measure through SOLAS, regulation V/12.

3.3 The implementation of a VTS is dependent on national law and factors such as geography, traffic characteristics and environmental conditions.

3.4 The use of VTSs may only be made mandatory in sea areas within the territorial seas of a coastal State[[1]](#footnote-1).

3.4 A VTS may also contribute to the safety of life at sea, safety and efficiency of navigation and protection of the marine environment from possible adverse effects of maritime traffic beyond the territorial seas of a coastal nation. VTSs may, therefore, be established:

* In association with an IMO adopted Ship Reporting System[[2]](#footnote-2) or a Ship Routeing System[[3]](#footnote-3), or
* On the basis of voluntary participation and compliance with the procedures of the VTS.

**4 RESPONSIBILITIES**

**4.1 Contracting Governments**

4.1.1 The Contracting Government should:

* + - 1. Promulgate laws and regulations to establish a legal basis for VTSs that gives effect to international law and SOLAS regulation V/12;
      2. Appoint and authorise a Competent authority for VTSs;
      3. Take appropriate action against a vessel flying its flag that is reported not to have complied with the provisions of a VTS;
      4. Take account of future technical and other developments recognized by the Organization relating to VTS.

**4.2 Competent authority for VTS**

4.2.1 The Competent authority should:

* + - 1. Establish a regulatory framework for establishing and operating VTSs in accordance with relevant international conventions and IMO instruments, IALA Standards and national law;
      2. Authorise a VTS provider to operate a VTS within a delineated VTS area in accordance with national and international law;
      3. Ensure that VTS training and certification is accredited and approved in accordance with IALA Standards;
      4. Establish a compliance and enforcement framework with respect to violations of VTS regulatory requirements.

**4.3 VTS provider**

* + 1. The VTS provider should:
       1. Ensure the VTS conforms with national law and the regulatory framework set by the Competent authority for VTS;
       2. Set operational objectives for the VTS that are consistent with improving the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and protection of the environment. The objectives set should be routinely evaluated to demonstrate they are being achieved;
       3. Ensure that appropriate equipment, systems and facilities are provided;
       4. Ensure that VTS personnel are appropriately trained and qualified.
       5. Ensure that information regarding the requirements and procedures of the VTS are promulgated in appropriate nautical publications;

**4.4 Participating vessels**

4.4.1 Participating vessels in a VTS area should:

1. Provide information required by the VTS;
2. Take into account advice provided by the VTS;
3. Comply with the provisions and instructions given to the vessel by the VTS unless contradictory safety reasons exist. Masters may be required to report on their actions should they decide to disregard any instruction, advice or request given by a VTS.

**5 PURPOSE OF A VTS**

5.1 The purpose of a vessel traffic service is to improve the safety and efficiency of navigation, safety of life at sea within the VTS area and to support the protection of the marine environment, worksites and offshore installations within the VTS area and the adjacent sea and shore areas.

5.2 To achieve its purpose, a VTS should manage the safe and efficient transit of vessels within the VTS area and mitigate the development of unsafe situations, through:

1. The provision of timely and relevant information on factors that may influence the vessel's transit and to assist on-board decision making. This may include:

* Position, identity, intention and movements of vessels;
* Maritime Safety Information;
* Limitations of vessels in the VTS area that may impose restrictions on the navigation of other vessels (e.g. manoeuvrability), or any other potential hindrances;
* Other information such as reporting formalities and ISPS details; and
* Support to, and cooperation with, Allied Services.

1. The monitoring and management of traffic to ensure the safety and efficiency of vessel movements. This may include:

* Forward planning and organising vessel movements;
* Organising the allocation of space;
* Forward planning of vessel movements;
* Establishing a system of traffic clearances or sailing plans, or both;
* Providing route advice; and
* Ensuring compliance with and enforcement of regulatory provisions for which they are empowered.

1. Responding to developing unsafe situations to assist the decision-making process on board. This may include:

* A vessel unsure of its route or position;
* A vessel deviating from the route;
* A vessel requiring guidance to an anchoring position;
* A vessel that has defects or deficiencies, such as navigation or manoeuvring equipment failure;
* Severe meteorological conditions (e.g. low visibility, strong winds);
* A vessel at risk of grounding, collision or allision; and
* Emergency response or support to emergency services.

**6 GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

6.1 Decisions concerning the navigation and the manoeuvring of the vessel remain with the master. Nothing in this Resolution changes the Master’s responsibility for all aspects of the operation of the vessel.

6.2 VTS communications and operational procedures should be timely, clear, concise and not open to misinterpretation.

6.3 VTS operates within a comprehensive environment in which ships, ports, allied services and other organisations fulfil their respective roles as appropriate. Effective data exchange and information sharing between participants is [are] fundamental to the overall operational efficiency and safety.

**7 IALA STANDARDS**

7.1 IALA provides international Standards, in accordance with relevant international obligations and recommendations, to ensure the harmonized implementation, development and operation of a VTS. The Standards are suitable for direct citation by Governments and are supported by associated Recommendations, Guidelines and Model Courses.

7.2 A VTS should conform to IALA Standards relating to VTS.

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| **Note**: Editorial checks to be completed:   * Confirm use/consistency of capitals for entities – e.g. VTS authority or VTS Authority * Confirm use and consistency of terms Contracting Governments / Competent authorities |

1. SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 12 (Vessel Traffic Services) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Refer to SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 11 (Ship Reporting Systems); Resolution A.851(20) General Principles for Ship Reporting Systems and Ship Reporting Requirements, including Guidelines for Reporting Incidents Involving Dangerous Goods, Harmful Substances and/or Marine Pollutants; and Resolution MSC.433(98) Guideline and Criteria for Ship Reporting Systems [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Refer to SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 10 (Ships’ Routeing) and Resolution A.572(14) General Provisions on Ships’ Routeing) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)