

IALA GUIDELINE

G1142

THE PROVISION OF LOCAL PORT SERVICES OTHER THAN VTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are many waterways where the Contracting Government(s) are of the opinion that the volume of traffic or the degree of risk does not justify exercising their rights under the International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea 74/78 (SOLAS) to establish Vessel Traffic Services (VTS).

Where a VTS is not required, other measures may be implemented to attain the expected level of safety and efficiency of the maritime traffic in the area, noting the associated volume of traffic and degree of risk. Such measures may include:

- Passive traffic management measures such as:
 - Improvements to visual and radio aids to navigation
 - Pilotage for all or certain categories of vessels
 - Space allocation policy for distinctive maritime user functions, incorporated, if necessary, in local by-laws, etc.
 - Ships' routing measures, on the basis of SOLAS V/10 and its associated IMO resolution A.572(14)¹ as amended
 - Ship reporting on the basis of SOLAS V/11 and the associated IMO resolutions A.851(20)² and MSC.433(98)³.
- Provision of local port services for co-ordination of services within the area by dissemination of information to vessels, berth or terminal operators and other stakeholders. These local port services are often described in terms such as "Local Port Services", "Port Control" or "Harbour Control".
- A combination of the above.

Passive traffic management measures do not involve communication/interaction with the mariner from the shore.

In contrast, local port services generally involve voice communication between the entity ashore and the mariner. In these situations, it is important that mariners are in no doubt as to whether they are communicating with a VTS, which can be expected to provide all the associated functions of a VTS, or whether they are communicating with an entity providing only information concerned with the management of the port or facility. It is unlikely that staff operating local port services will have been trained to the standards required by VTS.

It is, therefore, considered best practice for Contracting Governments/Competent Authorities to ensure that a clear differentiation exists between VTS and local port services, and that this is clearly communicated to mariners.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this document is to provide guidance to:

- Assist Governments/Competent Authorities to ensure the difference between VTS and local port services is clearly communicated to mariners, allied services and other stakeholders.
- Assist entities operating local port services to enhance efficiency and safety in a globally harmonised manner.

1 Res. A.572(14) General Provisions on Ships' Routing

2 Res. A.851(20) General Principles for Ship Reporting Systems and Ship Reporting Requirements

3 Res. MSC.433(98) Guideline and Criteria for Ship Reporting Systems



3. BACKGROUND

3.1. VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES (VTS)

A Vessel Traffic Service is a service implemented by a Competent Authority and should have the capability to interact with the traffic and to respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area.

VTS is recognised internationally as a navigational safety measure through the International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea 74/78 (SOLAS). In particular, the provisions in SOLAS Chapter V (Safety of Navigation) Regulation 12 provides for Vessel Traffic Services and states that:

- “Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) contribute to safety of life at sea, safety and efficiency of navigation and protection of the marine environment, adjacent shore areas, work sites and offshore installations from possible adverse effects of maritime traffic.”
- “Governments may establish VTS when, in their opinion, the volume of traffic or the degree of risk justifies such services”.

IMO Resolution A.857(20) Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services describes the principles and general operational provisions for the operation of a VTS and participating ships. Specifically, it describes the responsibilities of:

- Contracting governments/competent authorities for planning and establishing VTS, including establishing a legal basis for the operation of a VTS to ensure that the VTS is operated in accordance with national and international law and ensuring that a VTS Authority is appointed and legally empowered, and
- VTS Authorities for the operation and delivery of a VTS.

The establishment and on-going operation of a VTS is a considerable investment in terms of meeting the international obligations associated with establishing the services under national law and the equipment and associated qualifications and training for staff in both establishment and on-going operations.

IALA Recommendation V-119 on the Implementation of Vessel Traffic Services is a normative provision within IALA Standard 1040 – Vessel Traffic Services and provides guidance for the establishment and the ongoing operation of VTS.

Further, the Recommendation V-119 provides guidance to assist Contracting Governments/Competent Authorities determine when VTS may not be required as other measures may be sufficient to attain the desired level of safety and efficiency of the maritime traffic in the area, noting the associated volume of traffic and degree of risk.

3.2. LOCAL PORT SERVICES

Where a Contracting Government is of the opinion that the navigational complexity, volume of traffic or the degree of risk does not justify exercising their rights to establish VTS under provisions of SOLAS, there may be a need for information to be exchanged between ship and shore to ensure efficient handling of shipping and in-port processes. In such circumstances, it is particularly important that mariners are left in no doubt that they are communicating with local port services and not with a VTS.

Personnel providing such local port services should restrict communications to the provision of basic factual information and avoid opinion, advice or instruction that might be provided through a VTS by personnel who have undertaken specialist VTS training.

The functions of local port services may include:

- Information relating to entry and departure such as:
 - Berthing



- Pilot arrangements
 - Line handling arrangements
 - Meteorological conditions
 - Hydrological conditions
 - Status of aids to navigation
 - Local warnings and restrictions
- Information relayed from other allied services and in support of in-port operations such as:
 - Berth and mooring details
 - Waste handling arrangements
 - Fuel/bunkers
 - Crane and other cargo handling arrangements
 - Provisioning
 - Water supply
 - Customs and Immigration
 - ISPS information
 - Reporting formalities

3.3. DISTINCTION BETWEEN VTS AND A LOCAL PORT SERVICE

There are significant differences between local port services and a VTS. In particular:

- **International Framework** – There is no international convention for the implementation and operation of local port services such as that provided by SOLAS for VTS.
- **Staff Qualifications and Training** – There is no requirement for local port services to conform to international standards for qualifications and training such as that provide for VTS by IALA Standards for Training and Certification of VTS Personnel and associated Recommendations.
- **Capability** - There is no requirement for local port services to have the capability to:
 - Generate a comprehensive overview of traffic in its service area combined with all traffic influencing factors.
 - Compile a traffic image to enable staff to evaluate situations and make decisions accordingly
 - Respond to traffic situations developing in the area and to decide upon appropriate actions
 - Employ suitably qualified and trained staff to international standards

4. PRINCIPLES FOR OPERATING LOCAL PORT SERVICES

To assist entities operate local port services in a globally harmonised manner, the following principles are recommended as international best practice:

1. Identifier
2. Voice Communications
3. Promulgation
4. Qualifications and Training

4.1. IDENTIFIER

To avoid confusion to the mariner the IALA Guideline 1083 on “Standard Nomenclature to identify and refer to VTS centres” states that any service that is not authorised as a VTS should not use the term ‘VTS’ in its name identifier.



For global harmonisation, the title Local Port Services is strongly recommended, although it is recognised that alternative titles may be more appropriate under certain circumstances.

It is therefore recommended that local port services clearly distinguish that they are not a VTS in communications with masters and stakeholders through adoption of a similar format using a “name identifier” and an associated “location” suffix or prefix to identify local port services, for example ‘Port Z LPS’.

4.2. VOICE COMMUNICATIONS

The following principles for voice communications are recommended when operating local port services:

- Staff using radio communications equipment should be licenced and trained appropriately, for example, with a national radio operator’s certificate.
- Communications should be in the form of concise factual information and staff should be aware of their authorisation powers.

4.3. PROMULGATION

The details of any local service provided by an entity should be clearly described and promulgated in the appropriate navigational publications.

4.4. QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

While there are no international standards relating to the qualifications and training for the provision of local port services it is recommended that training should give due consideration to:

- The equipment in use
- Operational procedures
- The level of operator competence required
- The complexity of the information required to be exchanged

For global consistency it is suggested that training be based on the selection of appropriate and relevant modules (or elements within modules) from the V-103 syllabus.

Particular emphasis should be given to ensuring staff clearly understand the limitations of the local service being provided to ensure that the service delivered will not be mistaken for that of an authorised VTS.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

An entity operating local port services should give due consideration to the legal framework they operate under and possible implications that may arise as a result of the provision of information to individual vessels in the event of a shipping incident where staff may have failed to carry out their duty competently.