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The provision of local services

# Summary/BACKGROUND

Guidance on the provision of Local Port Services by ports where it is considered 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) was provided in the IALA VTS Manuals of 2008 and 2012 but was deleted from the current (2016) edition of the Manual.

New task invites the VTS Committee to reconsider the need for such guidance.

## Purpose of the document

The purpose of this input paper is to provide a proposal for consideration by the VTS Committee in the form of a draft guideline.

## Related documents

This draft guideline draws on the text in the VTS Manuals of 2008/2012 and presents it in the current standard format required for IALA Guidelines.

# Discussion

## The authors of this input paper believe that there is a clear need for such guidance. And have developed a draft guideline for consideration and further development as necessary by the VTS Committee. The draft guideline is at Appendix 1.

# References

1. IALA VTS Manual 2008 Art 0504
2. IALA VTS Manual 2012 Art 0504

# Action requested of the Committee

The Committee is requested to consider the draft guideline at Appendix 1 and to develop it further as required in response to task 1.1.4 and as a submission for Council’s consideration and approval.

1. Draft Guideline on the provision of local services.

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| * **I****ALA Guideline** |

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The Provision of Local ServiceS

**Edition 1.0**

**Document date**

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

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**1** **INTRODUCTION 4**

**2** **AIMS and OBJECTIVES 4**

**3** **BACKGROUND 4**

3.1 Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) 4

3.2 Local services 5

3.3 Distinction between VTS and a Local Service 5

**4** **PRINCIPLES FOR OPERATING LOCAL SERVICES 6**

4.1 Identifier 6

4.2 Voice Communications 7

4.3 Promulgation 7

4.4 Qualifications and Training 7

**5** **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS 7**

# INTRODUCTION

There are many waterways where the 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 are invariably implemented 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. Such measures 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’ routeing measures, on the basis of SOLAS V/10 and its associated IMO resolution A.572(14) as amended
  + Ship reporting on the basis of SOLAS V/11 and its associated IMO resolutions and guidelines as amended (submitting a proposal to IMO may be necessary - refer to IMO MSC/Circ.1060).
* Provision of local services for co-ordination of services within the area by dissemination of information to vessels, berth or terminal operators and other stakeholders. These local 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 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 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 services, and that this is clearly communicated to mariners.

1. **AIMS and OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this document is to provide guidance to:

* Assist Governments/Competent Authorities to ensure that a clear differentiation exists between VTS and local services, and that this is clearly communicated to mariners, allied services and other stakeholders.
* Assist entities operating local services to enhance efficiency and safety in a globally harmonised manner through the adoption of internationally recognised best practice.

1. **BACKGROUND**
   1. **Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)**

Vessel Traffic Services are 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 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 (Section 2.2.2) 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 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.

* 1. **Local services**

Local services offer a mechanism to aid efficiency in ports where relevant Government/s are of the opinion that the volume of traffic or the degree of risk does not justify exercising their rights to establish VTS under provisions of SOLAS.

They are invariably introduced by local entities in waterways characterised by lesser navigational complexity but where there is a need to provide information and co-ordination of services within the port community. Information on berth and port conditions are mainly disseminated to vessels and berth or terminal operators, stakeholders and allied services to assist with the management of the port or facility. Local services can also act as a medium for liaison between vessels and stevedores or allied services, as well as providing a basis for implementing port emergency plans.

Examples of the type of information commonly provided by local service include:

* Shipping schedules
* Meteorological and Hydrological data
* Berthing information
* Availability of port services
  1. **Distinction between VTS and a Local Service**

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

* **International Framework** – There is no international convention for the implementation and operation of local services such as that provided by SOLAS for VTS.
* **Staff Qualifications and Training –** There is no requirement for local 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 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

1. **PRINCIPLES FOR OPERATING LOCAL SERVICES**

To assist entities operate local 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
   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.

It is therefore recommended that local 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 services such as “Local Port Services”, “Port Control”, “Harbour Control” or “Pilots”. For example:

* ‘*Port Z* LPS’
* ‘*Port Y* Port Control’
* “Harbour Control *Port W*”
* ‘*Port* X PILOTS’
  1. **Voice Communications**

The following principles for voice communications are recommended:

* Staff using radio communications equipment should be licenced and trained appropriately. For example, 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.
  1. **Promulgation**

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

* 1. **Qualifications and Training**

While there are no international standards relating to the qualifications and training for the provision of local 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.

1. **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

An entity operating local 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.

1. Input document number, to be assigned by the Committee Secretary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Input papers should be assigned to a work task as listed in the Committee work plan which is available in input papers. Leave open if uncertain but consider how the paper is to be processed if not relevant to a work task [↑](#footnote-ref-2)