

Anchoring off Australian Ports

The purpose of this Marine Notice is to remind Masters of the precautions to be taken when it is decided to anchor off Australian ports.

Vessels, principally bulk-carriers, may be required to anchor off some Australian ports whilst waiting for berthing. Lengthy periods at anchor may be experienced.

Recent incidents indicate that some Masters are not applying the basic tenets of seamanship and commonsense when anchoring in off-shore and exposed anchorages.

Ports where off-shore anchoring will occur are on the New South Wales coast, mid Queensland coast, and the north-west coast of Western Australia. All can be subject to extremes of weather and the danger of a lee-shore.

Selecting Anchoring Site

At some ports there are designated anchorages; these are shown on large-scale charts. The port authority will direct the Master to the required anchorage.

Where anchorages are not designated the Master must select an anchoring position taking into account the following:

- Ample swinging room must be left from charted dangers and other anchored vessels.
- Good holding ground must be sought whenever possible. Recommendations may be found in Admiralty Sailing Directions and commercially available port guides.
- An adequate amount of cable, based on a published well-tried formula and the Master's experience of the vessel, is to be veered.

Watch-keeping

The attention of Masters is drawn to the requirements of STCW 1978, as amended in 1995 and 1997, (STCW Convention) Chapter VIII, Part 3, section 51, regarding ships at anchor.

It is absolutely essential that routines are in place so that the ship's position is regularly checked. Use of GPS, ECS systems, bearings and radar ranges is recommended.

Prevailing weather, predicted weather, tidal streams, proximity of land and traffic congestion at the anchorage must be taken in to account when specifying the position checking routine.

Weather

The Master must be aware of the particular meteorological conditions which may affect the vessel at anchor. For example intense depressions may form in the Tasman Sea which engender gale-force winds and heavy seas off the south-east coast ports. Ports on the Queensland and north-west coasts are subject to tropical cyclones (typhoons) of extreme violence.

It is essential that the Master monitors current weather forecasts and warnings. Weather forecast services are contained in the Admiralty List of Radio signals Vol 3 part 2. The Australian Bureau of Meteorology makes available coastal forecasts and warnings on their internet site: www.bom.gov.au.

Machinery

Ideally the main engines, steering gear, or windlass must not be dismantled or immobilised whilst at anchor as conditions may deteriorate at short notice. If defect rectification makes work on any of these machinery items essential, the situation should be



advised to the harbour VTS for their information and on-forwarding to the relevant harbour master and/or port authority. Appropriate notice for sea will be required to mobilise machinery.

Ballast

At all times ballast condition must be maintained so that the ship's propeller is fully submerged and the vessel's forward draught and trim are such that the requirements of the vessel's stability book are maintained and forward slamming is prevented.

In the event that deteriorating weather is forecast the Master must make a timely decision to take on heavy weather ballast before conditions become so extreme that ballasting becomes a risky operation.

Getting the Vessel Underway

The Master must assess the wind and sea conditions and get the vessel underway whenever

necessary. He should not wait for instructions from the harbour VTS or port authority, whether in a designated anchorage within port limits or not, if the Master considers the safety of the ship requires such action.

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