



## Marine Notice 14/2009

### Collision Risks to Off-Shore Yachts

The purpose of this Marine Notice is to reinforce to masters, officers of the watch and all seafarers their obligations to avoid collisions in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 (Colregs).

In particular all masters, officers of the watch and seafarers are alerted to the risks of collision between off-shore yachts and commercial trading vessels when yachts voyage in the vicinity of commercial shipping lanes.

In this regard Rule 18 of the Colregs prescribes that a power driven vessel underway shall keep out of the way of a sailing vessel. This presumes that the power driven vessel can see the sailing vessel (either by visual means or radar), is able to develop a Closest Point of Approach assessment and, if necessary, can take the appropriate avoiding action.

Investigations into collisions between commercial trading vessels and yachts, both in Australia and overseas, repeatedly show that yachts are extremely difficult to see from the bridge of a major vessel in some circumstances. Factors contributing to this difficulty include:

- Yachts are usually painted white, or light pastel colours, and merge with the seascape;
- Yachts make poor radar targets due to their construction and size;
- Yachts frequently do not maintain a steady course and make unexpected course alterations; and
- At night the lights prescribed by the Colregs for yachts (small yachts in particular) have very limited visual range – as little as one mile for yachts of less than 12 metres length over all.

As a result, yachts should not presume that they can be seen by an approaching vessel and should act accordingly.

Additional exacerbating factors are that:

- Large vessels can not alter course or reduce speed quickly;
- The visual lookout from yachts, particularly in a seaway, is often poor; and
- In confined waters, harbour channels or some designated routes (the Inner Route of the Great Barrier Reef for example), large vessels can not deviate from their intended course without engendering the risk of grounding.

As a result, officers of the watch on large vessels, and all crew aboard yachts are encouraged to exercise caution in circumstances where large vessels and yachts might be at close quarters.

Some simple precautions recommended for yachts on coastal voyages are:-

- Endeavour to keep a good visual and radar lookout;
- Avoid recognised shipping routes where at all possible;
- Fit and activate a radar reflector, an anti-collision radar transponder or radar target enhancer;
- Fit and utilise AIS;
- Maintain a listening watch on VHF Channel 16;
- Do not make unexpected course alterations when in the vicinity of other vessels; and
- Do not impede large vessels that have restricted room to manoeuvre (ColReg Rule 9 (b) prohibits this).

Yachts should also carry a 406 MHz EPIRB and marine radios, have an agreed contact schedule and make details of their intended voyage available to their emergency contacts for use should the need arise.

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