

20 Safety of Offshore Exploration and Exploitation Vessels

1 Offshore exploration and exploitation vessels in waters under Canadian jurisdiction

- 1.1 Some offshore exploration and exploitation work takes place in waters under Canadian jurisdiction (see attached drawing). Such areas of operation have been established on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, on the Scotian Shelf off Nova Scotia and Sable Island, in the Beaufort Sea off the Mackenzie Delta, in Hudson Bay and the Canadian waters of Lake Erie.
- 1.2 Frequently, complaints are received from these exploration or exploitation vessels stating that dangerous situations have developed because passing ships have come much too close to their areas of operation.
- 1.3 The most common complaint is the lack of any response to safety radiotelephone calls transmitted from these vessels to warn approaching ships. Most of these calls are made on the VHF distress, safety and calling frequency Channel 16, (156.8 MHz).
- 1.4 Other means of attracting attention such as the use of a signaling lamp and/or searchlight, the firing of rockets to draw the attention of the approaching ship, and the dispatching of a stand-by vessel to intercept have not always proved to be effective.
- 1.5 Some passing ships have also been observed using offshore exploration and exploitation vessels as a navigational way- point on a trans-oceanic voyage. This is a dangerous practice because it tends to concentrate passing ships at a place where their presence could adversely affect safe navigation.
- 1.6 Most of these waters are noted for their adverse weather conditions. Icebergs, extended periods of reduced visibility and ice coverage make it all the more difficult for passing ships and exploration and exploitation vessels to identify and make contact with each other.
- 1.7 Mariners are reminded when navigating in areas where exploration or exploitation work takes place to:
 - .1 give all offshore exploration and exploitation vessels a wide berth and if necessary make any course alterations in ample time so that there is no doubt to the personnel on such vessels that they have been seen and will be avoided by a wide margin;
 - .2 maintain a continuous listening watch on the VHF radio- telephone distress, safety and calling frequency (Channel 16, 156.8 MHz) and to respond to navigation safety calls on that frequency in accordance with:
 - .2.1 the appropriate Canadian legislation (see *VHF Radiotelephone Practices and Procedures Regulations* which apply in Canadian waters and fishing zones);
 - .2.2 Regulation 12 of Chapter IV of SOLAS which requires ships fitted with VHF radiotelephone to maintain a continuous listening watch on the navigating bridge on VHF DSC Channel 70 and Channel 16 when practicable; and
 - .3 monitor the bridge-to-bridge VHF Channel 13 in certain areas of the Great Lakes in accordance with the *VHF Radiotelephone Practices and Procedures Regulations*.
 - .4 contact the most convenient Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre (MCTS) free of charge, to obtain the latest information on the positions of offshore exploration and exploitation vessels by addressing the request to:
 - .4.1 "ECAREG CANADA" for East Coast waters,

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- .4.2 "NORDREG CANADA" for Arctic waters,
- .4.3 "Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre (MCTS) Sarnia (Sarnia Traffic)" for Canadian Great Lakes waters, and
- .4.4 "VTS OFFSHORE" for West Coast waters; and
- .5 plot the most recent positions of all offshore exploration and exploitation vessels so that a route can be planned to safely avoid such vessels.

2 Notices to Mariners and broadcast Notices to Shipping

2.1 (a) A temporary Notice to Mariners is published quarterly. This gives a complete list of the up-to-date positions of every reported offshore exploration and exploitation vessel in waters under Canadian jurisdiction, except on the Great Lakes. These notices are promulgated in Section I of the monthly Notices to Mariners edition numbers 1, 4, 7 and 10. In the event of changes in the position of such vessel(s) a Notice to Shipping will be issued.

(b) Production Platforms can indicate a permanent offshore structure which significantly affects navigation. These changes are charted by Notice to Mariners or through New Edition of a chart.

2.2 On the Great Lakes (presently only in Lake Erie) exploration and exploitation vessels change positions too frequently to warrant being published as a Notice to Mariners. Subsequently information on their positions is promulgated by Notice to Shipping broadcasts. For the positions of all drill barges and exploration or exploitation vessels operating East of Long Point, mariners may also call Seaway Long Point on VHF Channel 11 for the latest information prior to transiting this area.

2.3 Selected Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centres (MCTS) also broadcast twice daily:

- .1 any new Notices to Shipping (NOTSHIPS) over a 48 hour period; and
- .2 a list of active NOTSHIPS.

These NOTSHIPS and the list contain any revision to the position of every reported exploration and exploitation vessel operating in waters under Canadian jurisdiction.

A list of these stations, the frequencies and times of broadcast can be found in the Radio Aids to Marine Navigation, published by the Canadian Coast Guard and in the List of Coast Radio Stations, published by the International Telecommunication Union.

2.4 The United States also broadcast daily NAVAREA warnings to shipping which include any reported movement and relocation of exploration and exploitation vessels. All such movements are summarized monthly in section III of the Notices to Mariners published by the United States. It also contains a list by number of all NAVAREA warnings still in effect. The quarterly edition summarizes the details of all NAVAREA warnings still in effect and includes the positions of all reported exploration and exploitation vessels.

2.5 Mariners are reminded that *Section 7 of the Canadian Collision Regulations* states that, "Every vessel shall navigate with particular caution where navigation may be difficult or hazardous and, for that purpose, shall comply with any instructions and directions contained in Notices to Mariners and Notices to Shipping".

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3 Safety zones

- 3.1 In Canadian Waters, Rule 43 of the *Collision Regulations* establishes safety zones which are 500 meters in all directions from an exploration or exploitation vessel or 50 meters beyond the boundaries of its anchor pattern, whichever area is greater. Ships are prohibited from Navigating within a Safety Zone unless they are specifically excepted. The Regulations permit under certain circumstances the establishment of a larger safety zone.
- 3.2 In offshore areas, the *Canada Oil and Gas Drilling Regulations* also establish safety zones and prohibit unauthorized ships from entering these zones. These zones may extend (a) for 50 meters beyond the boundaries of the anchor pattern for a drilling unit that is anchored and (b) 500 meters in all directions from any other drilling unit that is on location over a well.
- 3.3 The navigational warning signal may be used by offshore exploration and exploitation vessels in imminent danger of being rammed, or by stations that consider a ship is in imminent danger of running aground. The navigational warning signal is an interrupted tone transmitted by radiotelephone on 2182 kHz in the medium frequency maritime bands for a period of 15 seconds, prior to the broadcast of a vital navigational warning. The power of this transmission should, where practicable, be limited to the minimum necessary for reception by ships in the immediate vicinity of the offshore exploration or exploitation vessel or of the land concerned. The navigational warning signal should be immediately followed by a radiotelephone transmission giving the identity and position of the offshore exploration or exploitation vessel as part of a vital navigational warning to shipping. Stations that consider a ship is in imminent danger of running aground should similarly provide as much identification and position information as possible as part of a vital navigational warning to the endangered vessel.

4 Violations

Persons in charge of exploration or exploitation vessels must ensure that such units exhibit the proper lights and sound the prescribed signals. They should also take all reasonable measures to give early warning to ensure that unauthorized ships keep clear if it appears that these ships may enter the safety zone. Ships that violate safety zones should be reported to the nearest Transport Canada Marine Safety office immediately following the incident for follow-up action. The information required in this report is stated below for the use of all mariners when reporting a near miss incident to the appropriate responsible authority.

- 4.1 Date and time of incident
- 4.2 Location of unit
- 4.3 Name of drilling unit
- 4.4 Name of stand-by vessel
- 4.5 Name(s) of other support vessel(s) used during incident
- 4.6 Offending vessel:
- a) Name
 - b) Port of Registry (or Flag of Registry)
 - c) Course
 - d) Speed
 - e) Estimated size and description
 - f) Bearing and distance of CPA

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4.7 Weather Conditions:

- a) Sea, swell, state and direction
- b) Visibility
- c) Precipitation
- d) Wind speed and direction

4.8 Description of light and sound

4.9 Plotting charts from the drilling unit and the stand-by vessel depicting the incident

4.10 Report of actions taken by unit and all vessels involved in incident

4.11 Copy of radar log

4.12 A summary of all communications exchanged; and/or attempts to communicate that are pertinent to the incident.

5 Before entering an area of exploration and exploitation

5.1 Mariners are advised to obtain up-to-date position reports on drilling vessels and production installations before entering an area of exploration or exploitation. This information is available by contacting, as appropriate, ECAREG CANADA, NORDREG CANADA or VTS OFFSHORE via any Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre (MCTS).

5.2 Mariners should make contact with the Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre (MCTS) described in paragraph 1.7.4 of this notice as soon as possible to ensure receipt of timely information on the current position of each exploration and exploitation vessel as this information may not be contained in the latest Notice to Mariners.

6 Abandoned Artificial Islands

In Arctic waters mariners may encounter artificial islands. These islands, which are man-made structures, are marked on navigation charts. A number of these artificial islands have been abandoned and are marked on the chart by the symbol "Aband". Mariners are warned that abandoned artificial islands tend to wear down below the wave action depth line and continue to be a hazard to shipping.

Authority: Transport Canada

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