
FISHING VESSELS – Domestic and Overseas Management Beyond European Waters

Notice to all Owners, Employers, Managers, Skippers and Crews of Domestic and Overseas Fishing vessels

This notice replaces MGN 336(F)

Summary

This note provides guidance for owners and skippers when they are operating their vessel outside UK waters.

Key Points

- All types of surveys must be undertaken regardless of the vessels location;
- Owners must be in control of the operation of the vessel and the responsibility and accountability of the skipper must be established;
- Vessels should be visited at regular intervals to effectively monitor the vessels safety and a means of communication established between skipper owner and agent to ensure items relating to safety are addressed;
- Risk Assessments should be undertaken and all crew should read and implement it;
- There must be people on board with good maritime English;
- All crew must comply with MGN 411;
- Arrangements must be in place to ensure the vessel can be properly repaired regardless of location;
- Spares (and tools) should be carried, such as bilge pumps, cooling water pumps pipe work, hydraulic equipment etc;
- Engine spares should be carried especially when operating in remote areas;
- All safety equipment must remain serviceable and in date so ways of servicing should be identified, it may be prudent in remote areas to service and update equipment prior to departure.

1. Introduction/ Background

1.1 A Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) investigation found that a fishing vessel operating from the west coast of Africa did not have access to adequate spares, technical support and repair facilities.

1.2 The bilge pumping capability of the vessel had become deficient and a petrol driven, portable salvage pump was used as the only means of pumping bilges. Sadly, this led to carbon monoxide poisoning and death of one crew member whilst using the pump inside

the engine room. It was fortunate that more deaths did not occur when rescue attempts were made (including the local rescue services).

2. Managing Fishing Vessels

- 2.1 Owners are reminded that the requirement for surveys; renewals, intermediates and annuals where required, still stand regardless of where the vessel is deployed.
- 2.2 The day-to-day management of all fishing vessels is paramount to safety. Communication, as in any other business, is vital and it is up to the crew and shore-side support to communicate regularly and effectively.
- 2.3 All fishing vessels need to be well managed and this may be particularly difficult to achieve for vessels operating outside familiar European ports. Some form of management system should be adopted to monitor and assist such vessels.
- 2.4 Management systems need not be “long-winded” affairs and simplicity is the key (a term often used in management is “KIS” - Keep It Simple!).
- 2.5 Owners and skippers operating (but not limited to) fishing vessels outside the European regime should discuss and address the following items BEFORE the operation commences:-

2.5.1 Control

- The owner should make provision for controlling the whole operation. Strategy, allocation of resources, action plans and correction of major deviations should be addressed.
- The authority of the skipper should be established with the owner, including responsibility and accountability.
- The relationship between the owner and the administration through the managing agent is important to establish.

2.5.2 Monitoring

- The vessel’s Risk Assessment¹ should be reviewed and updated as necessary.
- Effective means of monitoring the safety of the vessel should be identified. Rather than relying entirely on the skipper, it may be prudent to visit the vessel at regular intervals and independently assess items affecting safety.
- The owner should fully investigate the reason and action taken whenever the vessel diverts for repair.
- Minor and major incidents affecting the safety of the vessel should be reported to the owner and, when applicable, the class society, to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB)².

2.5.3 Communication

- All members of the crew should be made aware of, read and implement the vessel’s risk assessments. Procedures, written in “checklist format”, may assist with this requirement.

- Items affecting safety should be reported by any crew member to the skipper and/or owner. Reporting should be actively encouraged.
- Regular agreed means of communication between the skipper owner and agent should be established to address items affecting safety.

It is both extremely important and a legal requirement to have aboard personnel with good maritime English for key safety communications in an emergency.

2.5.4 Implementation

- Sufficient and suitably qualified crew should be appointed to the vessel. All crew members should have completed mandatory safety training courses (fire-fighting, first aid, sea survival and safety awareness). Reference should also be made to MGN 411(M&F).
- Each crew member should be aware of, and practise, their specific duties in an emergency. Drills (Fire, Abandon Ships and Man Overboard) should be carried out at regular intervals (at least monthly) and be suitably recorded. Drills will be witnessed by Surveyors at intermediate and renewal surveys. A publication, “Safety Drills and Procedures” and the accompanying folder and CD can be obtained by quoting MCA/212 and MCA/213, from EC Group at:

EC Group
 Europa Park
 Magnet Road
 Grays
 Essex
 RM20 4DN
 Telephone number: 0845 603 2431
 Email address: mca@ecgroup.co.uk

- Maintenance of the vessel and safety equipment should be carried out and reported to the owner. The following points should be considered in particular:-

a) Repair Facilities

These may be lacking in remote ports. Alternative means should be provided and may involve either:

- i) the vessel diverting to a suitable port for repairs; or
- ii) a suitable repair company, or agent, travelling to the vessel to carry out repairs.

The appointment of a suitable ship’s agent (or “husband”) may be necessary to assist with facilitating repairs.

b) Spare Gear

Additional spares (and associated tools) should be carried on vessels that do not have access to repair facilities; for example those for:

Bilge pumps
 Cooling water pumps
 Repair of pipe work (e.g. emergency repair kits)
 Hydraulic equipment
 Fuses/Circuit breaker parts

If the vessel is classed it should carry the minimum spares required by the Classification Society.

c) Engine Spares

It is also recommended that vessels operating long-term in remote areas carry main and auxiliary engine spares on board; for example:-

Piston (including rings)
Connecting rod
Cylinder head (including valves)
Cylinder liner

The above lists are suggested spare parts and should not be considered exhaustive.

2.5.5 **Safety Equipment**

- Means of servicing safety equipment should be identified. Service/supply agents for fire extinguishers, liferafts, flares, EPIRBS etc. may be in short supply, but this does not mean that they should be overlooked.
- It is the responsibility of the owner and skipper to ensure that all life saving apparatus, including liferafts, fire fighting equipment and radio equipment, including EPIRBS, remain serviceable and in date for inspection.
- If service stations are not available in the intended area of operation, it may be prudent to fully service and update safety equipment prior to departure.
- Fire detection and safety equipment should be tested regularly and an entry made in the log.

¹ It is a legal requirement that fishing vessels carry out a Risk Assessment, to identify and reduce associated hazards. Further guidance may be found within MGN 20(M+F) and from SEAFISH.

² Requirements detailed in Statutory Instrument (SI) No.881 Of 2005 - The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations, and MGN 289.

More Information

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