

VOYAGE PLANNING



CONTACTS AND OTHER INFORMATION

Harbor Safety Committee (HSC) Websites

Puget Sound:

<http://pshsc.org/>

Columbia River:

<http://lcrhsc.org/>

Grays Harbor:

[www.portofgraysharbor.com/
harbor-safety/](http://www.portofgraysharbor.com/harbor-safety/)

More information

Department of Ecology
Spill Prevention Section
PO Box 47600

Olympia, WA 98504-7600

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills

Special accommodations

If you need this publication in an alternative format, call the Spills Program at (360) 407-7455. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call (877) 833-6341.

Avoid hazards with voyage planning.

Even well-trained and skilled mariners can make simple mistakes when operating navigational equipment or interpreting information.

Washington State believes a high-quality voyage plan can:

- Reduce simple errors and mistakes.
- Provide ways to cross-check conclusions and assumptions.
- Highlight essential information when needed.
- Enhance the bridge team's shared understanding of expectations during transit.

Washington State considers voyage planning an important element of oil spill prevention.

Accident investigations show navigational errors may occur because of human error, not equipment failure. In many cases, information was available that would have prevented the incident, but the navigational team was unaware the information was available, or they didn't understand its significance.

All vessels transiting Washington State waters are encouraged to plan carefully.

When planning passage through state waters, establish an intended track to allow as much sea room as possible in case of bad weather or a shipboard casualty. Also consider the area to be avoided (ATBA) along the Washington coast. A voyage plan should:

- Anticipate the risks which may occur along the route.
- Incorporate strategies to reduce the risks.
- Incorporate strategies to minimize human error.

Voyage Plan Best Practices:

At a minimum, a company's written policies and procedures for voyage planning should:

- Follow International Maritime Organization (IMO) voyage planning guidelines to ensure safe navigation for the entire passage.
- Provide adequate staff and well-rested bridge crew for each watch during the passage.
- Ensure a well-rested bunkering team, particularly if bunkering operations are planned after a long maneuvering period into port.
- Brief all crew members involved to ensure a shared understanding of the risks the vessel could encounter.
- Train crew for emergencies.
- Provide easily accessible contingency plans for identified risks.
- Require a master/pilot exchange, which should result in consensus between the pilot and the bridge team regarding the pilot's intentions.
- Continuously monitor the vessel's position.
- Cross-check decisions so errors can be detected and corrected as early as possible.
- Use all information as it becomes available.
- Avoid over-reliance on any electronic device.

A voyage plan should answer these questions:

- What local sources provide information on anchorage sites and weather conditions?
- Does vital ship-system maintenance need to occur before entering coastal waters?
- Have pre-arrival systems checks been completed? Are back-up systems ready to take the load if needed?
- Is enough fuel available for transit through an emission control area?
- Where are pilotage grounds located?
- Where can the vessel safely wait if bar conditions or port congestion keep it at sea?
- If anchoring is necessary, especially along a coast, what precautions are required?
- If a vessel emergency occurs, where, and under what conditions is assistance available?
- What is the process for taking the vessel under tow, if needed?
- What local authorities must be notified if a casualty, oil spill, or substantial threat occurs?

After a pilot boards, the voyage plan may need to be revised.

Voyage planning with an electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS)

As of July 1, 2017, all SOLAS* vessels engaged in international voyages need to carry an ECDIS. A voyage plan created on an ECDIS must address the same IMO guidelines and answer the same passage questions as one created on paper charts. Unique considerations when using an ECDIS in planning and executing a voyage plan include:

- Availability of electronic navigational charts (ENC) and whether paper charts will also be needed for areas without proper ENCs.
- Detection of sensory input failure, and what to do if it happens.
- Methods for updating and maintaining an ECDIS.
- Double-checking voyage plans when the ECDIS is updated.
- Optimal chart scale use and information layering.
- Proper safety contours, alarms, and cross-track error limits.

* *Vessels covered under the 1974 international Safety of Life at Sea treaty*