

# SOLAS V Regulations

The following regulations are the elements of SOLAS V relevant to pleasure craft under 150 GT.

The exact wording of the regulations is provided followed by some explanatory notes from the RYA. An explanation is also given by the MCA in their SOLAS V for Pleasure Craft leaflet.

**Radar Reflectors** - Regulation 19

**Lifesaving Signals** - Regulation 29

**Danger Messages** - Regulations 31 & 32

**Distress Messages** - Regulation 33

**Voyage / Passage Planning** - Regulation 34

**Misuse of Distress Signals** - Regulation 35

## Radar Reflectors

### Regulation 19

2.1 All ships irrespective of size shall have:

2.1.7 if less than 150 gross tonnage and if practicable, a radar reflector or other means, to enable detection by ships navigating by radar at both 9 and 3 GHz;

RYA Note: 'If practicable' means if it is possible to use a radar reflector on your boat then you should use one. Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) guidance says that if your boat is more than 15m in length, it should be practicable to fit a radar reflector that complies with the current IMO test standard 8729:1997 (i.e. the reflector should have a radar cross section (RCS) of 10m<sup>2</sup>). If your boat is less than 15m in length, you should fit the largest radar reflector (in terms of RCS) that you can. Whatever size your boat is, you should fit the reflector according to the manufacturer's instructions and as high as possible for maximum detection range.

It is important that you are visible on a ship's radar, as many large ships are reliant on their radar for spotting other vessels in the area.

## Lifesaving Signals

### Regulation 29

An illustrated table describing the life-saving signals\* shall be readily available to the officer of the watch of every ship to which this chapter applies. The signals shall be used by ships or persons in distress when communicating with lifesaving stations, maritime rescue units and aircraft engaged in search and rescue operations.

\* Such lifesaving signals are described in the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual Vol.III, Mobile Facilities, and illustrated in the International Code of Signals, as amended pursuant to resolution A.80(IV).

RYA Note: The life-saving signals table is available from a number of sources including the MCA web-site. The regulation requires that a copy of the table is easily to hand on board when at sea.

MCA guidance says that as the signals are to be used by any ship or person in distress, when communicating with SAR units, it is important that mariners, whether engaged in commercial or leisure activities, are familiar with them.

## **Danger Messages**

### **Regulations 31 & 32**

The text of these regulations is not quoted as its wording is more applicable to a commercial ship's master.

The essence of Regulation 31 is that a pleasure craft skipper has a responsibility to pass on information about navigation dangers (if they have not already been reported) to the Coastguard by any means possible. Examples of navigational dangers include a dangerous derelict or other dangerous obstructions, tropical storms, winds of Force 10 or more for which no warning has been received. The Coastguard is in turn required to promulgate any danger information received.

Regulation 32 deals with details of information to include in danger messages and gives examples of typical danger messages. Sufficient information about any navigation dangers you experience or witness (For example: position, nature of danger, time seen/witnessed, any other useful information) should be passed on to enable other shipping in the area to avoid it.

## **Distress Messages**

### **Regulation 33 - Distress Situations: Obligations and procedures**

1. The master of a ship at sea which is in a position to be able to provide assistance on receiving information from any source that persons are in distress at sea, is bound to proceed with all speed to their assistance, if possible informing them or the search and rescue service that the ship is doing so. This obligation to provide assistance applies regardless of the nationality or status of such persons or the circumstances in which they are found. If the ship receiving the distress alert is unable or, in the special circumstances of the case, considers it unreasonable or unnecessary to proceed to their assistance, the master must enter in the log-book the reason for failing to proceed to the assistance of the persons in distress, taking into account the recommendation of the Organization, to inform the appropriate search and rescue service accordingly.

1.1. Contracting Governments shall co-ordinate and co-operate to ensure that masters of ships providing assistance by embarking persons in distress at sea are released from their obligations with minimum further deviation from the ships' intended voyage, provided that releasing the master of the ship from the obligations under the current regulation does not further endanger the safety of life at sea. The Contracting Government responsible for the search and rescue region in which such assistance is rendered shall exercise primary responsibility for ensuring such co-ordination and co-operation occurs, so that survivors assisted are disembarked from the assisting ship and delivered to a place of safety, taking into account the particular circumstances of the case and guidelines developed by the Organization. In these cases the relevant Contracting Governments shall arrange for such disembarkation to be effected as soon as reasonably practicable.

2. The master of a ship in distress or the search and rescue service concerned, after consultation, so far as may be possible, with the masters of ships which answer the distress alert, has the right to requisition one or more of those ships as the master of the ship in distress or the search and rescue service considers best able to render assistance,

and it shall be the duty of the master or masters of the ship or ships requisitioned to comply with the requisition by continuing to proceed with all speed to the assistance of persons in distress.

3. Masters of ships shall be released from the obligation imposed by paragraph 1 on learning that their ships have not been requisitioned and that one or more other ships have been requisitioned and are complying with the requisition. This decision shall, if possible be communicated to the other requisitioned ships and to the search and rescue service.

4. The master of a ship shall be released from the obligation imposed by paragraph 1 and, if his ship has been requisitioned, from the obligation imposed by paragraph 2 on being informed by the persons in distress or by the search and rescue service or by the master of another ship which has reached such persons that assistance is no longer necessary.

5. The provisions of this regulation do not prejudice the Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules of Law Relating to Assistance and Salvage at Sea, signed at Brussels on 23 September 1910, particularly the obligation to render assistance imposed by article 11 of that Convention.\*

6. Masters of ships who have embarked persons in distress at sea shall treat them with humanity, within the capabilities and limitations of the ship.

\* International Convention on Salvage 1989 done at London on 28 April 1989 entered into force on 14 July 1996

RYA Note: This regulation applies to all craft including pleasure vessels and requires you to respond to any distress signal that you see or hear and you must help anyone or any boat in distress as best you can.

## **Voyage / Passage Planning**

### **Regulation 34 - Safe navigation and avoidance of dangerous situations**

1. Prior to proceeding to sea, the master shall ensure that the intended voyage has been planned using the appropriate nautical charts and nautical publications for the area concerned, taking into account the guidelines and recommendations developed by the Organization.\*

2. The voyage plan shall identify a route which:

2.1. takes into account any relevant ships' routing systems

2.2. ensures sufficient sea room for the safe passage of the ship throughout the voyage

2.3. anticipates all known navigational hazards and adverse weather conditions; and

2.4. takes into account the marine environmental protection measures that apply, and avoids, as far as possible, actions and activities which could cause damage to the environment

\*Refer to the Guidelines for Voyage Planning, adopted by the Organization by Resolution A.893(21)

The MCA Guidance Notes for this regulation state: For small vessels and pleasure-craft the degree of voyage planning will be depend upon the size of vessel, its crew and the length of the voyage. The MCA expects all mariners to make a careful assessment of any proposed voyage taking into account all dangers to navigation, weather forecasts, tidal predictions and other relevant factors including the competence of the crew.

RYA Note: Skippers should note that this regulation changes the status of passage planning on small boats from simply good practice to a requirement under UK law for vessels proceeding to sea. "Going to sea" is defined as proceeding outside of 'categorized waters' (most of the Solent area counts as categorised waters, as do many estuaries). See MSN 1827 for full details.

## **Misuse of Distress signals**

### **Regulation 35**

1. The use of an international distress signal, except for the purpose of indicating that a person or persons are in distress, and the use of any signal which may be confused with an international distress signal are prohibited.

RYA Note: This regulation reinforces the fact that distress signals have a life saving role and should not be misused as this could put your own or someone else's life at risk.