
EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations give effect to the amendments made by Resolution A626(15) of the International Maritime Organization to the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions At Sea 1972. The amendments come into effect internationally on 19th November 1989.

United Kingdom vessels (including hovercraft) wherever they may be, and other vessels in United Kingdom waters are required to comply with the International Regulations as so amended; and the signals of distress set out in Annex IV to the International Regulations are prescribed for use by vessels as such signals. (Provision for seaplanes on the surface of the water will be made in another statutory instrument.)

The Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1983 are revoked except for the provisions therein effecting amendments to previous Acts and Instruments.

The International Regulations previously contained in that Instrument are set out in full in the Schedule to these Regulations with the amendments now effected. The principal changes to the International Regulations are:

(1) In Rule 1(e) the discretion of the government of the flag State to permit vessels of special construction or purpose not to comply fully with the requirements as to lights, shapes and sounds signalling appliances is widened to a limited extent.

(2) In Rule 3(h) the definition of “vessel constrained by her draught” is narrowed to cover vessels which because of their draught are restricted in their ability to move by the available width as well as by the available depth of navigable waters. (Such vessels are entitled to special privileges under Rule 18(d).)

(3) Rule 8 is amended by the addition of a paragraph spelling out in more detail the duties of a vessel which by any of the Rules is required not to impede another vessel and the duties of the vessel which is not to be impeded.

(4) Rule 10(a) (traffic separation schemes) is amended to include a statement that the rules for traffic separation schemes do not over-ride other rules.

(5) Rule 10(c) is amended to clarify the course to be steered when crossing a traffic separation scheme.

(6) In Annex IV, paragraph 1(o), approved signals made by radio communications are included amongst the distress signals specified.

Admiralty Notices to Mariners are published by the Hydrographer of the Navy and are obtainable from Admiralty Chart Agents appointed by the Hydrographer. Admiralty Notice to Mariners No. 2 contains a list of Admiralty Chart Agents. The Chromaticity Chart mentioned in Annex I to the International Regulations is published in CIE publication No. 2.2 and is obtainable from the National Illumination Committee of Great Britain, c/o Building Research Station, Watford WD2 7JR. The Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual mentioned in Annex IV of the International Regulations is obtainable from the International Maritime Organization, 4 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7SR. The International Code of Signals mentioned in Annex IV of the International Regulations is obtainable from H.M. Stationery Office. Merchant Shipping Notices are available from the Department of Transport Library, Sunley House, High Holborn, London WC1.