

Navigational Rules of the Road

Conduct of Vessels in Any Condition of Visibility

By: Captain Robert L. Figulas

Rule 5: Lookout – ‘Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper lookout and he must not undertake any duties that would interfere with these responsibilities of sight and sound.’

Rule 6: Safe Speed – Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and stop within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

Rule 7: Risk of Collision – “Such risk shall be deemed to exist if the compass bearing of an approaching vessel does not appreciably change.” ‘Even if change is evident, particularly when approaching a very large vessel or tow at close range.’

Rule 8: Action to Avoid Collision – “Any action you take to avoid a collision must be taken early enough to be effective and must be large enough to be readily apparent to the other vessel.” “...any vessel may slacken her speed, stop, or reverse her engines to allow more time to assess the situation.”

These basic rules of the road would seem simple enough to follow, but without proper training of crew and the ship’s masters knowledge of his crews’ capabilities, events can go horribly wrong very quickly.

...USS McCain...USS Fitzgerald...

Tom Stokes