



## Marine Notice No. 19 of 2021

*Notice to all Masters, Owners, Boating Clubs, Yachtspersons, Seafarers and Users of Pleasure and Recreational Craft*

### Importance of Voyage Planning and avoiding dangerous situations in Adverse Weather and Sea Conditions

In response to the Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) recommendations in the recent report published by the MCIB into an incident involving an Irish registered yacht off the North Coast of Spain, the Department of Transport would like to remind all seafarers about the importance of voyage planning as outlined in Chapter 2.2 of the Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft. Attention is also drawn to Appendix 6 of the Code of Practice, which contains information on Weather, Sea States and Tides, and Appendix 8, where an example of a Passage Planning Template can be found. It is essential to carry out regular weather forecast checks during coastal, offshore and ocean voyages.

The full MCIB report may be obtained from the website of the Marine Casualty Investigation Board at [www.mcib.ie](http://www.mcib.ie)

The Department wishes to highlight the provisions of Chapter V (Safety of Navigation) of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974 (SOLAS) regarding the 'Safe navigation and avoidance of dangerous situations' (Regulation 34), which promotes safe navigation and operation of ships with regard to voyage planning.

**Recreational craft users should particularly consider the following points when planning a boating trip:**

- **Weather:** before going boating, check the weather forecast and get regular updates if planning to be out for any length of time.
- **Tides:** check the tidal predictions for the trip and ensure that they fit with the planned trip.
- **Limitations of the vessel:** consider whether the boat is up to the proposed trip and that there is sufficient safety equipment and stores.
- **Crew:** take into account the experience and physical ability of the crew. Crews suffering from cold, tiredness and seasickness won't be able to do their job properly and this could result in an overburdened skipper.

- **Navigational Dangers:** make sure the crew is familiar with any navigational dangers that may be encountered during the boating trip. This generally means checking an up-to-date chart and a current pilot book or almanac.
- **Contingency plan:** always have a contingency plan should anything go wrong. Before departing, consider places where the boat can take refuge should conditions deteriorate or if the crew suffer an incident or injury. Bear in mind that the GPS set is vulnerable and could fail at the most inconvenient time. It is sensible and good practice to make sure that the crew are not over-reliant on the GPS set and that they can navigate to safety without it should it fail.
- **Information ashore:** make sure that someone ashore knows the plans for the trip and knows what to do should they become concerned for the crews' wellbeing. Ensure a designated person/organisation ashore is aware of the intended voyage, departure and return times, and has a procedure in place to raise the alarm if the need arises.

See Appendix 8 of the Code of Practice for an example of the Voyage/Passage Planning Template.

The Department recommends that all operators pass Traffic Report Messages via the nearest Coast Guard Radio Station. [Marine Notice No. 61 of 2020](#) provides information regarding Irish Coast Guard VHF working channels. There is no charge for this service. Please note, however, that overdue reporting remains the responsibility of the vessel's shore contact. The Irish Coast Guard will not initiate overdue procedures on the basis of Traffic Report Messages.

The Department also reminds all operators on the use of anchors and storm sails in emergency situations and recommends practice on hoisting storm sails and deploying storm management devices, such as the use of sea anchors, prior to departure.

The Code of Practice is a free document and hardcopies can be obtained on request, in both English and Irish, from the Maritime Safety Policy Division of the Department at email [MarineLeisureSafety@transport.gov.ie](mailto:MarineLeisureSafety@transport.gov.ie).

The Code is also available to view or download from the Department's website at the following link: [Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft](#).

All recreational craft users are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Code of Practice and to heed the safety advice and recommendations.

Safety information and advice is also available on the Department's Safety on the Water Website at the following link [Safety on the Water](#).

Note: Marine Notices are issued purely for maritime safety and navigation reasons and should not be construed as conferring rights or granting permissions.

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