

Traffic Separation Scheme and Puget Sound Vessel Traffic Service

A Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) exists for the Strait of Juan de Fuca ("Strait") and Puget Sound ("Sound") and is recognized by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Puget Sound Vessel Traffic Service (PSVTS) provides timely information to participating vessels regarding traffic movement, weather, and hazards to navigation. Details of the regulations regarding participation with PSVTS can be found in the PSVTS User's Manual available through PSVTS or in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, chapter 33, part 161 (33 CFR 161).

While PSVTS greatly improves the safety of navigation and the TSS increases the predictability of vessel movements, mariners must be aware that there are limitations to the system, and must maintain a sharp lookout for other vessels. Of particular concern are smaller vessels, not participating with PSVTS that may operate in or near the TSS. These smaller vessels are not prohibited from the TSS, but must abide by Rule 10 of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) while operating within the TSS.

In some cases a small non-VTS participating vessel (a vessel that is not required to participate and is not voluntarily participating in the VTS) is not detected by PSVTS due to rough seas, weather conditions, or poor radar return from the vessel. When this occurs PSVTS will not be able to provide warning of a developing close quarters situation. Therefore, for VTS participants, a sharp lookout remains a necessity despite the additional safety provided by PSVTS.

If a ship's watch is in doubt as to, or concerned with, the movement of another vessel (participant or nonparticipant) in PSVTS' area they should take action consistent with the COLREGS. In addition, the ship's watch is encouraged to report this information to PSVTS as soon as possible via

WHY IT MATTERS

This bulletin was prepared to share lessons learned with industry and the interested public. Prevention recommendations are also made to prevent similar occurrences. Sharing lessons learned is important if Washington State is to achieve its "zero spills" goal.

WEBSITE INFORMATION

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html>

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Special accommodations:

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the designated VHF radio frequency. PSVTS may be able to assist in identifying the vessel, and determine the vessel's speed and direction of movement. PSVTS may also be able to contact the vessel to warn of a developing close-quarters situation. The reporting of non-participating vessels operating in the TSS will also assist other ships in the area.

Maintaining safety in the Strait and Sound requires the vigilance and active participation of all mariners using PSVTS and the TSS.

For more information or a copy of the PSVTS User's Manual contact Puget Sound Vessel Traffic Service at (206)217-6155, (206) 217-6151 or (206)217-6058 (fax) or on their homepage:

<http://www.uscg.mil/d13/psvts/>

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- SAB 98-01:** Shipboard Systems Modifications (98-252)

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Phone: (360) 407-7455

Fax: (360) 407-7288 or 1-800-664-9184

Program website:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html>

Publication website:

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