

## Introduction

These guidelines have been developed jointly by the Harbour Master and the Poole Yachting Association and are intended for all who play a part in ensuring the safety of yacht and dinghy racing within the shipping channels in Poole Harbour Commissioners area of jurisdiction. This includes transiting between club and start line if this results in transiting in or across any shipping channel.

The guidance is based on good communication throughout which requires all yachts and safety boats involved in racing in the Harbour to carry VHF and to keep a listening watch.

**Definition: Commercial vessel – All vessels subject to compulsory pilotage and all vessels over 25m required to use the reporting points in accordance with Harbour Control rules.**

## Guidance for Harbour Control Officers

Harbour Control Officers have a responsibility to monitor and organize commercial vessel movements with the aim of reducing any risk to the safety of navigation in Poole Harbour to As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP). In order to do this it is essential that good communication is maintained with Race Officers to exchange relevant information.

The Harbour entrance is a high-risk area. It is narrow, subject to strong tidal streams and a very choppy sea state in certain conditions; there are many movements of commercial and leisure craft particularly at weekends and bank holidays in the summer, and uniquely, the Sandbanks Chain Ferry transits across the entrance at the narrowest point.

1. Be aware of sailing races taking place during your period of duty by reference to the PYA annual fixture list.
2. Respond to Race Officers' requests for information giving latest shipping movements, including type of vessel, and other known activity in the Harbour. Discuss and advise where proposed courses have the potential to impede commercial shipping.
3. If a race is scheduled in the calendar, and the Race Officer has not called approximately 30 minutes before start time, call the Yacht Club hosting the event, asking for information. Ask for Race Officers' mobile telephone number if it has not been given.
4. Call Sandbanks Ferry and advise them of all races or fleet transits through the

Harbour entrance, giving as much useful information as necessary.

5. Make a broadcast on Channel 14 warning other Harbour users, if considered appropriate.
6. Keep a record of any changes to races, e.g. cancellation, modification, etc. as advised by the Race Officer.
7. When advised by a Race Officer that it is proposed to race through the Harbour entrance on a Saturday, Sunday or Bank Holiday, if in your opinion the circumstances make this unsafe, you are to issue a specific direction on my behalf prohibiting the race from taking place. Record the event in the log with all the relevant details. If in any doubt, telephone the Duty Harbour Master for advice, particularly if your decision is challenged.
8. Racing is not to be permitted in the main shipping channels while Restricted Visibility Routine is in force. This routine is implemented when visibility is 500 metres or less.
9. When a race course is planned to use or enter any part of the main deep water channels and the race start time will conflict with a commercial vessel movement, then the start time must be delayed. Race officers will take commercial movements into account when setting courses.

*(Reference - Guidance to Race Officers part 4 - When a commercial ship is about to depart from the port or is inbound at the Harbour entrance, then the race start time should be delayed until that vessel is clear if appropriate.)*

10. If, due to a change of plan, a commercial vessel is ready to depart, when conflict with a yacht race fleet is likely, then the departure time of the commercial vessel should, if possible, be delayed for a short period to mitigate risk. The Race Officer must be advised.

## **Guidance for Race Officers**

These guidelines are intended for Race Officers to assist them in their race planning.

1. Contact Harbour Control by telephone (01202 440230). It is important that a telephone link is maintained between Harbour Control and the Race Officer for the duration of the race. Call Harbour Control approximately 30 minutes before start time and give the Harbour Control Officer (HCO) your mobile number. Find out the latest shipping movements to ensure that craft, racing or otherwise, do not affect the passage of any commercial shipping. The Harbour

Control Officer will also up-date you with any other relevant information, which may affect safety, such as congestion of other small craft. Advise Harbour Control when racing has completed for the day, and all participants safely accounted-for.

It is preferred that a Race Officer is available for all racing in the Harbour however when one is not available then the gate boat skipper must assume this responsibility.

## 2. **Monitoring and broadcasting Commercial vessel movements.**

*(Commercial vessels have a mandatory obligation to report to Harbour Control via VHF channel 14 as they pass the reporting points, listed below and also marked on navigation charts as . This information is useful to smaller craft as the latter can monitor a commercial vessel's live progress via VHF and make decisions based on this information to avoid close quarter situations).*

The Race Officer must monitor VHF channel 14 throughout the event and keep themselves apprised of any changes to shipping movements.

All racing yachts must be informed of the expected commercial vessel movements prior to the start of the race.

The Race Officer should rebroadcast on the VHF channel monitored by the racing fleet all relevant information that will mitigate potential conflict.

See Guidance for Yacht Skippers, item 3 - Monitoring Commercial Vessel Movements.

3. **When a commercial vessel is manoeuvring in the Turning Basin, the exclusion zone around the vessel changes to 100m in all directions.** Race Officers are to broadcast to the racing fleet that all racing yachts are to stay clear of vessels manoeuvring in the Turning Basin. The Race Officer can then rebroadcast when the restriction is lifted.

4. **Shipping Channels and race marks.** Avoid use of main channel buoys as turning marks whenever possible. The following navigation buoys should not be used as race marks at any time:

From Swash and No.10 buoys to Bell and No.16 buoys inclusive, Aunt Betty Buoy, Hamish Buoy, Stakes Buoy and No.30 Buoy.

Make appropriate use of the Bell, Stakes, Hamish and Ro-Ro race marks.

When other conditions and criteria allow, use North Channel in preference to Middle Ship Channel when possible.

Where it is necessary to cross a main shipping channel, plan the course at right angles, or as near right angled as possible.

When a commercial ship is about to depart from the port, or is inbound at the Harbour entrance, then the race start time should be delayed until that vessel is clear (if appropriate).

5. **Weather Forecast.** Obtain a reliable detailed forecast. Conditions may be obvious at start time, but might they deteriorate during the race?
6. **What is the wind direction and strength?** They may be similar in harbour and Bay, but sea conditions do vary. Obtain a report from outside if possible. Consider the known wind shadow areas and the possible lack of wind as well as the wind strength.
7. **Check tide times at start and estimated finish.** Assess the tidal stream for the times participants are expected to pass through the entrance. Are there likely to be difficulties?
8. **Visibility.** Check for visibility and the forecast for the duration of the race. Check with Harbour Control if Restricted Visibility Routine is in force. Racing is not permitted in the main shipping channels when RVR is in force or while visibility is 500 metres or less in the race area.
9. **Suitability of craft.** Are the type of craft competing suitable for the predicted weather conditions?
10. **Consider the start line.** If racing through the entrance, the Start Line should be located far enough away so that craft are dispersed by the time they pass through. Avoid situations where a number of yachts will transit en-mass.
11. **Safety Boats.** Whenever yachts, which are **NOT** carrying fully operational engines, are racing through the Harbour Entrance the Race Organisers are to station adequate safety boat cover at the Harbour Entrance. If there are likely to be difficulties with craft making way through the entrance, consider extra safety boats for towing. The safety boats are to be in communication with the Race Officer and Harbour Control.
12. **Density of Traffic.** Consider other activities taking place, e.g. leisure craft transiting shipping channels immediately either side of bridge lift times, water skiing, number of personal watercraft using the PW area, etc.
13. **Decisions.** Having considered all these matters it remains the responsibility of the organising club, via the Race Officer, to decide about starting the race and its conduct. Attention is also drawn to the desirability of including within the Sailing Instructions, a competitor's declaration of insurance and waiver of liability against the race organisation.

14. **It remains the Race Officer's responsibility to minimise the risk.** The options will normally be:-
- a) Run the race as planned.
  - b) Run the race with modifications/restrictions; e.g. advance or delay start time or station extra safety boats.
  - c) Cancel the race.
15. Inform Harbour Control of your decision. The HCO has the authority to issue a Special Direction on behalf of the Harbour Master to prohibit racing through the Harbour entrance if he believes that the conditions and circumstances pose too great a risk. If this happens the Harbour Master will follow up with a written explanation.

## Guidance for Racing Yacht Skippers

**Nothing in these guidelines exonerates the Skipper of a Racing Yacht from their obligation to fully comply with IRPCS and Poole Harbour Byelaws.**

1. Skippers of Racing Yachts and Dinghies competing within Poole Harbour must be fully aware of these guidelines.

The Skipper must be aware and accept that they remain fully responsible for the safety of their vessel and crew at all times and that no blame can be placed on PHC or the race organisers due to information or instruction received.

2. Before racing commences ensure you are aware of:
  - a) Expected commercial vessel movements, via Race Control on VHF or the club's notice board.
  - b) Weather forecast.
  - c) Expected tidal conditions.

3. **Monitoring commercial vessel movements.**

*(Commercial vessels have a mandatory obligation to report to Harbour Control via VHF channel 14 as they pass the reporting points, listed below and also marked on navigation charts as . This information is useful to smaller craft as the latter can monitor a commercial vessel's live progress via VHF and make decisions based on this information to avoid close quarter situations).*

Monitor your race designated VHF channel where appropriate and take note of any commercial vessel movements in progress within Poole Harbour as it is relayed to you via race control.

All skippers of racing yachts should be aware that commercial vessels report in via VHF channel 14 at the following positions:

- Underway from her berth.
- Outbound at Stakes Buoy.
- Outbound at Aunt Betty Buoy.
- Outbound at the Bar Buoy.
  
- Inbound 15 minutes from the Bar Buoy.
- Inbound at the Bar Buoy.
- Inbound at the No.8 Channel Buoy
- Inbound at Aunt Betty Buoy.
- Inbound at Stakes Buoy.
- All Fast on her berth.

**4. Lookout.**

At all times maintain a 360° lookout taking care not to get caught out by vessels approaching from the area obscured by your sails.

**5. Exclusion zone.**

Yacht Skippers are reminded of IRPCS Rule 9 (a),(b) & (d) – Narrow Channels

- (a) A vessel proceeding along the course of a narrow channel or fairway shall keep as near to the outer limit of the channel or fairway which lies on her starboard side as is safe and practicable.
- (b) A vessel of less than 20 metres in length or a sailing vessel shall not impede the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within a narrow channel or fairway.
- (d) A vessel shall not cross a narrow channel or fairway if such crossing impedes the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within such channel or fairway. The latter vessel may use the sound signal prescribed in Rule 34(d) if in doubt as to the intention of the crossing vessel.

**Exclusion Zone is 500m clear ahead.** As a guide a racing yacht should keep at least the distance of the next set of navigation buoys clear ahead of a commercial vessel in the Middle Ship Channel and Swash Channel. South of Aunt Betty Buoy, in Brownsea Roads and the Harbour Entrance this should be extended to two sets of navigation buoys.

**This guide in no way replaces the statutory obligations under the IRPCS.**

When an escort vessel is being used, racing yachts must not pass between the escort vessel and the commercial vessel. The escort vessel will have blue flashing lights. At times for operational reasons the escort vessel may be closer than the above guide however, in this case yachts are still expected to maintain the distances explained in the guidance above.

**6. Turning Basin.**

When a commercial vessel is manoeuvring in the Turning Basin all racing yachts must keep well clear.

**7. Controlled Vessel Movement.**

Harbour Control will broadcast on VHF channel 14 when a vessel is classed as a Controlled Vessel Movement. This information, should it occur when racing is underway, will be relayed to you via Race Control.

There shall be a moving exclusion zone around the Controlled Vessel Movement of 500m ahead, 50 metres either side and 50m astern. The same guidance above can be used when estimating distance ahead. When an escort vessel is displaying blue flashing lights, racing yachts must not pass between the escort vessel and the commercial vessel. At times for operational reasons the escort vessel may be closer than the above exclusion zone, in this case yachts are still required to maintain a 500m minimum limit.

**8. Restricted Visibility Routine.** Restricted Visibility Routine will be in force when the visibility is reduced (500 metres or less) such that an extra risk is imposed on vessels navigating in the main shipping channels.

When Restricted Visibility Routine is in force, any racing that includes courses set within or crossing the main shipping channels will be postponed or cancelled. When visibility is 500 metres or less in the race area then racing will be postponed or cancelled. If racing in these areas is already underway when visibility reduces, races will be abandoned by the Race Officer. Competitors will be informed by normal racing signals, VHF and/or safety boats. Yachts returning ashore from the race area should follow RVR procedures, monitoring channel 14 where possible, remaining in the small boat channels etc. and should follow directions given by club safety boats.

## Guidance for Pilots and Masters

**1. Communication.**

Establish radio contact with the escort vessel on VHF Channel 14.

## 2. **Exclusion Zone.**

Advise escort vessel and Harbour Control if the distance required ahead to provide a safe exclusion zone is other than 500 metres. Notwithstanding IRPCS Rule 6, the safe stopping distance of the escorted vessel and the Harbour traffic density should be taken into consideration.

Adjust exclusion zone distance ahead as required during passage.

Advise escort vessel when no longer required.

## Guidance for PHC Escort Coxswains

### 1. **Communication.**

Establish radio contact with the escorted vessel on VHF channel 14.

### 2. **Exclusion Zone.**

Adjust distance ahead as per master / pilot's requirements.

3. Maintain distance ahead unless advised otherwise by master / pilot or if there is an incident.

4. Blue flashing lights should always be used when escorting.

5. Loud hailer should be used to attract attention as required.

## Guidance for PYA Safety Boat Coxswains

1. The safety boat (when assisting with escort duties) flying the "U" flag should hold station abeam of the escort vessel. If the escort vessel is required to break from station then the safety boat should maintain the distance ahead (but not directly ahead) until all racing dinghies/yachts are clear.

2. The safety boat crew should relay information to dinghies that are not permitted to carry a VHF under race rules.