



# Boating Safety Circular 64

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## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BOATING SAFETY CIRCULAR

The first Boating Safety Circular was published on November 1, 1969 and to quote from the Foreword to that issue:

"The Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard has established the Boating Safety Circular as a means to 'pass the word' to boat and equipment manufacturers, distributors, dealers, and to certain others concerned with boating safety. The need for a way to do this became evident soon after the establishment of the Office of Boating Safety [now the Office of Navigation Safety and Waterway Services]. Many letters we received asked for explanations of various rules and regulations for pleasure craft or requested information which would be of general interest. This Circular will give us the means to communicate better on these matters and help us all to work toward our common goal of safe boating. The Boating Safety Circulars are informational only -- nothing appearing in them will establish or change any law or regulations -- and will be of direct value as a source of information on established or proposed regulations or standards. They will improve coordination and help us to provide better service to the public. The Circular will not be a regular periodical, but will be issued from time to time as needed to maintain good communications. Issues will be consecutively numbered so that readers will know if an issue has failed to reach them."

Although we have changed our layout from time to time, tried various issue number systems and made the Circular a quarterly rather than an "as needed" publication, very little has changed in the purpose of the Boating Safety Circular or in its

content. Because of increased interest in the Circular and numerous requests for back issues, in addition to our regular features, this issue contains a compendium of articles from all previous BSCs which contain material we still consider important.

Some of the articles on the following pages have been edited to include stories covering the same subjects published in later issues. Others have been rewritten to reflect changes in applicability, availability of materials and differences in technology or the "state of the art." Although each article ends with a reference to the issue in which it appeared for the benefit of readers who want to review them, we will no longer provide copies of back issues.

## AN ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN REMEMBER YOUR SOUND SIGNALS IN RESTRICTED VISIBILITY

About a year ago a 110 foot crewboat servicing offshore oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico rammed a fishing party boat that was at anchor with 20 passengers on board. The operators of both vessels were to blame for this accident in which the fishing boat sank and one passenger drowned.

The crewboat operator, who relied totally upon his vessel's radar as a means of maintaining a proper lookout, was travelling at a speed of about 18 knots in a fog that had reduced visibility to a quarter of a mile. The operator apparently

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overlooked the possibility that other vessels could be in the vicinity and might not present as strong an image on the radarscope as that of a drilling rig or a production platform.

The fishing vessel was anchored in the fog and the operator had not sounded the required signals. The operator mistakenly believed that the Navigation Rules required sounding fog signals only when other vessels were around. Furthermore, he failed to sound the required signals when he first noticed the contact on his own vessel's radar approximately 10 minutes before the fatal collision.

In fact, the Rules are very specific about when signals must be sounded, their interval and their duration. Rule 35 of the Navigation Rules states, in part, that:

In or near an area of restricted visibility, during daylight hours or at night, the following signals must be sounded:

The operator of a power-driven vessel making way through the water must sound one prolonged blast at intervals of not more than 2 minutes.

The operator of a power-driven vessel underway, but stopped and making no way through the water, must sound at intervals of not more than 2 minutes, two prolonged blasts in succession with an interval of about 2 seconds between them.

The operator of a sailing vessel, a vessel engaged in fishing and a vessel engaged in towing or pushing another vessel must sound at intervals of not more than 2 minutes, three blasts in succession -- one prolonged followed by two short blasts. The operator of a vessel engaged in fishing, when at anchor, and the operator of a vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver when carrying out work at

anchor, must sound the same signal, one prolonged followed by two short blasts.

The operator of a vessel at anchor must at intervals of not more than one minute ring the bell rapidly for about 5 seconds. A vessel at anchor may also sound three blasts in succession -- one short, one prolonged and one short blast to give warning of its position and of the possibility of collision to an approaching vessel.

The operator of a vessel of less than 12 meters in length is not required to give the above signals, but if they are not, some other efficient sound signal must be made at intervals of not more than 2 minutes.

All operators of recreational boats are reminded of the importance of sounding proper signals while underway or at anchor during periods of limited visibility. Boat operators in the Gulf of Mexico are asked to be particularly careful to sound proper signals under such conditions because of the large number of high speed vessels servicing offshore structures.

The Coast Guard publishes these rules in a book titled "NAVIGATION RULES, INTERNATIONAL AND INLAND" (COMDTINST M16672.2A) which may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The current price is \$6.50 per copy and the stock number is 050-012-00192-8. The book may be ordered in two ways -- by telephone or mail. To order by telephone, call (202) 783-3238, ask for the book by name, and give the stock number. You may pay using your VISA or MasterCard.

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Boating Safety Circulars are for information only. No Federal statute or regulation is established or changed in this circular

VESSEL	SIGNAL DURATION	SIGNAL INTERVAL
POWER-DRIVEN UNDERWAY	ONE PROLONGED BLAST  ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ [4 - 6 seconds]	EVERY 2 MINUTES
POWER-DRIVEN AT REST	TWO PROLONGED BLASTS  ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ [4 - 6 seconds]  2 second pause  ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ [4 - 6 seconds]	EVERY 2 MINUTES
SAILING VESSEL VESSEL FISHING VESSEL PUSHING OR TOWING	ONE PROLONGED & TWO SHORT BLASTS  ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ [4 - 6 seconds]  ZZZZ [one second]    ZZZZ [one second]	EVERY 2 MINUTES
FISHING WHEN AT ANCHOR RESTRICTED IN ABILITY TO MANEUVER	ONE PROLONGED & TWO SHORT BLASTS  ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ [4 - 6 seconds]  ZZZZ [one second]    ZZZZ [one second]	EVERY 2 MINUTES
VESSEL AT ANCHOR or to give warning of position and possibility of collision to approaching vessel:	RING BELL RAPIDLY FOR 5 SECONDS  ONE SHORT BLAST, ONE LONG BLAST AND ONE SHORT BLAST  ZZZZ [one second]  ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ [4 - 6 seconds]  ZZZZ [one second]	EVERY 1 MINUTE  AS NECESSARY
LESS THAN 12 METERS IN LENGTH	SOME TYPE OF SOUND SIGNAL	EVERY 2 MINUTES