

Suez Canal Navigation

Introduction

Further to an incident occurring to a Club entered vessel whilst conducting a transit of the Suez Canal the Loss Prevention Department would like to bring to the attention of Members and their vessels the following areas of navigational interest from the Suez Canal Authorities 'Rules of Navigation' which must be borne in mind by all Deck officers engaged in navigating vessels through the Suez Canal.

Responsibilities

All vessels and the Master and Owners thereof, by the action alone of navigating in the canal bind themselves to the conditions laid down in the Suez Canal Authority Rules of Navigation and to which they acknowledge being familiar with, and conforming with said contents.

In particular, Members must remain aware that any vessel transiting the canal or at its associated ports or roads is responsible for any damage or consequential loss it may cause either directly or indirectly to herself or to canal property, personnel or any third parties. Such vessels are deemed responsible without the option to release themselves from responsibility by limited liability. Moreover, the vessel and its owners guarantee to indemnify the Canal Authority in respect of any claim arising against them by reason of any damage they may cause either directly or indirectly to a third party. Finally a vessel and her owners waive the right to claim against the Canal Authority for any damages caused to them by a third party whilst in the canal.

As the results of any incident which may occur in the canal the Canal Authority may delay a vessel for the purpose of investigating any claim or dispute that may arise, or due to any formal or informal complaints that may arise, or for an alleged violation of the rules of the canal or due to security reasons. A vessel may also be delayed until any damage to ship, hull, fittings or any other concerns have been made such that the vessel is deemed capable of completing a safe passage through the canal. If a vessel is detained for whatever reason no claims for damages from vessel or owners will be entertained by the Canal Authorities.



Navigational Requirements

Vessels will not be allowed to transit the canal in any of the following cases:

- 1) If her Tropical loadline is submerged or her loadlines not clearly visible.
- 2) Any vessel considered by the Canal Authorities to be dangerous to navigation.
- 3) If a vessel has a list of more than 3 degrees.
- 4) If trimmed such that her manoeuvrability is affected.
- 5) If a vessel is loaded such that she is very tender or her stability is a cause for concern.

- 6) If a vessel's maximum draught exceeds the canal maximum permissible drafts.
- 7) If a vessel carries dangerous goods and does not comply with the requirements of the Rules of Navigation in respect of said goods.
- 8) If a vessel's deck cargo is protruding from the vessel's sides in such a manner that it is endangering the safety of the transit.

All vessels transiting the canal must have an operational main engine RPM indicator and rudder angle indicator available in the wheelhouse. In the event of the RPM indicator being defective then a vessel will still be permitted to transit the canal, however, if the

RPM indicator is still defective on the second transit and each following transit then an additional due of US\$ 4,500 will be payable. If the rudder angle indicator is defective then the vessel will not be permitted to transit the canal, or may transit the canal towed by Canal Authority tugs.

Prior to transit all vessels must ensure their steering gear, engine room machinery, telegaph, VHF, radar, bridge-engine room communication systems, whistles and, as mentioned above, main engine RPM indicator and rudder angle indicator are all in good working order. All vessels, not fitted with a main engine telegraph logger must maintain bridge and engine room movement books during their transit.

All vessels transiting the canal are to be provided with a searchlight on their bow meeting numerous specifications as laid down by the Canal Authority; the Rules of Navigation should be referred to for the full specifications as to what is required.

All vessels entering, transiting or leaving the canal must take a pilot, however, the Canal Authority may assign a tug master on vessels of less than 1,500 S.C.GRT (Suez Canal GRT) or a coxwain on vessels of less than 800 S.C.GRT in place of a pilot. In some cases an extra pilot will be required, such as on vessels exceeding 80,000 S.C.GRT, Lash vessels of over 35,000 S.C.GRT, all fourth generation container ships and third generation container ships of over 60,000 S.C.GRT. In addition additional pilots will be required on vessel having restricted visibility from the bridge, or on any vessel with a draft of great than 16.15 m (53 ft).

All vessels must comply with the requirements of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) whilst in the canal and all waters connected therewith.

The Master of a vessel or his qualified representative must be present on the bridge at all times, and any peculiarities with regard to the shiphandling of the vessel must be brought to the attention of the pilot upon boarding the vessel. A bridge, engine room and anchor watch must be maintained, as applicable, whilst a vessel is in canal waters.

The duties of the pilot will commence and cease upon entering or leaving the entrance buoys at either Port Said or Suez, and the pilot will only give advice on courses to steer, engine movements etc. The responsibility for the safe navigation of the vessel remains with the Master at all times. If, in the interests of dispatch, it is deemed appropriate for the pilot to give helm and/or telegraph orders and instruction

to attending tugs, then any such order will be deemed to have been given by the Master, and the responsibility will rest with same.

In cases of bad weather the canal authority may authorise Masters to bring their vessels into the entrance of the canal to facilitate safe board for the pilots.

Upon boarding a vessel a pilot will hand the Master a Declaration of Navigability which is to be completed by the Master, signed and then returned to the Pilot.

During navigation all vessels should stop when the passage ahead is not clear, and slow down when passing collapsed or banks under repairs, as well as when passing vessels in sidings or cuts, or dredgers or any other floating units made fast.

With regard to navigation within the canal, the following activities are prohibited:

- 1) Anchoring or the use of thrusters within the canal, except in the case of absolute necessity.
- 2) The use of automatic pilot when in the canal is absolutely forbidden, hand steering is to be engaged at all times whilst underway.
- 3) The sounding of the whistle is forbidden except for the sounding of authorised or required signals.
- 4) Blinding lights shall not be directed at the bridge or in any direction which would interfere with the safe navigation of other vessels.

Vessels transiting the canal are restricted in the maximum transit speed permitted based on vessel type and location within the canal as shown in the table below.

For vessels that are particularly slow, additional dues may be levied.

For vessels with a draft exceeding 12.8 metres (42 ft.), the vessel shall observe the same speed as stated above for vessels in the tankers group, however, this does not apply to container ships. If a vessels transit speed is equal to her critical main engine RPM then the vessel should contact the Canal Authority and advise them accordingly.

Although no maximum or minimum distances to be maintained between vessels within a canal convoy are specified, vessels shall ensure they observe the maximum permitted transit speeds as tabled above, and maintain an adequate distance to the vessel ahead and astern. This is to ensure that they can take suitable positive avoiding action in the case of the vessel ahead suffering engine/steering failure and/or running aground, and such that they can advise vessels astern in case of an incident with own ship, such that the vessel astern has as much warning as possible so as to take suitable avoiding action. Distances to vessel ahead and astern should be monitored during the Canal transit and any concerns raised with the pilot(s) onboard such that distances can be increased if this is deemed necessary.



Maximum Suez Canal Transit Speeds

| Location | Tankers Group | Other Vessels |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Port Taufic – Gineifa with a head current | 6 Knots | 7 Knots |
| Port Taufix –Gineifa with a stern current | 7.5 Knots | 8 Knots |
| Gineifa – Kabret | 7.5 Knots | 8 Knots |
| Kabrey– Deversoir | 8 Knots | 8.5 Knots |
| Deversoir – Port Sand | 7.5 Knots | 8 Knots |



Use of Tugs

The Suez Canal Authority has various requirements concerning the mandatory escort of vessels by Authority tugs, the principal ship types affected being VLCC's, ULCC's, LPG/LNG and large bulk carriers, the various requirements for the number of tugs depend on a vessels S.C.NRT (Suez Canal Net Tonnage). There are various other requirements including tugs being required to escort loaded semi-submersible vessels and drillships, and the full various requirements for the imposition of tug can be found in the Rules of Navigation.

The Master of a vessel having use of a tug placed at his disposal has the executive control for the manoeuvres of the tug and his vessel. As stated previously, for expediency, orders may be given directly by a Pilot with the Masters agreement. However, any damage of accidents resulting directly or indirectly from the use of a tug by a vessel, including damage to the tug itself, whatever the circumstances of the incident, the vessel and Master of the vessel will be held responsible.

The Canal Authority may impose the requirement to take one or more tugs during a canal transit, whenever the Authority deems this necessary for the safety of the vessel or the canal. This may apply to any vessel without mechanical power, whos machinery is or becomes disabled, has malfunctioning steering, or which may become unmanageable for any reason, or having engine or steering problems for the second time during a transit.

Vessels with poor wheelhouse visibility due to deck cargo or other obstructions shall be towed through the canal.

Mooring Boats and Moorings

Vessels transiting the canal are to be provided with mooring boats by the Canal Authority, with one boat required for vessels up to 5,000 S.C.GRT, and two for larger vessels. These boats are to be hung off utilising ships lifting gear such that they are ready for immediate use, and it has to borne in mind that these mooring boats are quoted as having a gross weight of 4 tons, including crew, especially if it is planned to use a ships provisions cranes. If a vessel is unable to lift the mooring boat(s) and does not have or is unable to use her lifeboats then she will have to be escorted through the canal by a tug.

To enable all vessels to be made fast to the canal bank, if this becomes necessary, at least 6 floating mooring lines are deemed necessary by the Canal Authority. It is also further stated that all vessels should have fire wires made fast both forward and aft to enable the vessel to be moved in case of emergency.

Emergencies

Whenever a vessel which under any circumstances causes or finds obstruction in the channel she must immediately warn other vessels in the vicinity by sounding 4 long blasts on her whistle to mean 'the channel is not free'.

This signal must be repeated every 3 minutes until concerned vessels have answered in the same manner. As soon as they hear the signal mentioned, these vessels must take steps to stop and commence a radio watch to received full details of the alert given by the vessel which sent the original warning signal. The other vessels shall then maintain a radio watch until advised otherwise.

If, when a vessel is apprching or passing a dredger and suffers an engine or steering failure, such as to make the vessel Not Under Command as per the definition in the Collision Regulations, then the vessel has to give the signal: one long blast followed by two short blasts on her whistle.

If a vessel is underway and has to stop in an emergency, she must, if other vessels are following, attract their attention by giving 5 or 6 short blasts on her whistle, suplemeneted by four of five long flashes with the aldis lamp or mast signal lamp and also contact the local movement control office by any means and advise them 'I am reducing speed and may have to stop and make fast'. A vessel stopping accidentally at night, must in addition, immediately replace their white stern light by a red light and the requirement to display the red light on the stern rather than the stern light also applies when a vessel is made fast in the canal for whatever reason.

If a vessel runs aground then the vessel must immediately hoist the signal specified in the Rules of Navigation dependent on whether the passage is clear for tugs or not, and contact the appropriate control office advising whether a tug is required or not. In the case of a grounding then the Canal Authorities are empowered to order and direct all operations required to get the vessel afloat and if necessary unloaded and towed. However, the Master and vessel remain responsible for all damage or accidents of whatever kind occuring which may be the direct or indirect consequence of the grounding. All attempts by other vessels to free a grounded vessel are strictly prohibited.

All charges which may incurred by the Canal Authority for towing a vessel post grounding or to refloat, repair or unload a vessel will all be for the vessel and her owners account.

When a collision appears probable, vessels must not hesitate to run aground in order to avoid a collision, and in this regard vessels should be aware of the nature of the canal bottom and banks at all times, so as to, so far as possible, ground on sand if this is possible.

In the event that a vessel strands, sinks or runs aground, the Canal Authority, if it deems

the vessel to be an obstruction or a menace to navigation, shall of its own accord take such action as may be necessary to remove or destroy the vessel by whatever means it deems necessary, all for the owners costs. The authority may also sell the vessel or wreck at public auction so as to cover all expenses incurred.

In the event of a leak occurring or being discovered on a vessel, the local control office must be informed at once, and vessels in the vicinity must be informed by the vessel sounding a prolonged blast on her whistle and taking all actions to cure the leak. In such a situation the Canal Authorities may take whatever action they deem necessary, including moving the vessel to a berth, taking her to sea or beaching. And needless to say, the vessels owners are responsible for all costs incurred and damages arising either directly or indirectly from any such incident and any associated pollution including costs and compensation.

In the event of a fire occurring on a vessel she must immediately inform the local control office and alert vessels in the vicinity by sounding a prolonged blast on her whistle. Vessels in the vicinity, if applicable, shall be ready to change position if it is deemed necessary. Subsequent fire fighting activities onboard will be the responsibility of the Master, however, Canal Authorities will co-operate with the Master for the purpose of conducting the fire fighting operations. If, in the opinion of the Canal Authorities, there is a risk of the fire spreading, they may order any action deemed to be in the best interests of all parties, including removing the vessel to sea, beaching the vessel or moving berth. Vessel and Owners are again responsible for all damage and accidents arising from fire outbreaks and subsequent salvage efforts.

In the event that a vessel opts to moor voluntarily during a sandstorm or fog. She shall sound during the manoeuvre 6 short blasts on her whistle every 2 minutes. Once the vessel is moored she must ring a bell rapidly for 5 seconds at intervals not exceeding one minute. If the vessel is over 100m in length she will have to ring the bell forward and a gong aft, at intervals of not exceeding one minute. The vessel is to continue making these signals until she is notified that all other concerned vessels have been informed of her mooring.

Pollution

Vessels must not discharge any polluting substance into the canal, this includes polluted ballast water, slops, polluted bilge water, oil or garbage. An additional due of US\$ 5,000 is levied for any garbage, waste or objects thrown

overboard. Again, any pollution costs, damages and cleanup costs, incurred either directly or indirectly, will be for vessel / owners account.

Signals

Whilst in the canal a vessel may be signalled by one of the shore stations along the canal bank to conduct movements / actions such as standby to proceed, proceed, make fast, immediate stopping etc. During daylight these signals utilise the standard marine navigational shapes such as a cylinder, ball and cone, and the letter, numeral and substitute code signal flags, at night lights are used; for full details or the various signals given by the various signal stations and their particular meanings the Rules of Navigation have to be consulted.

Numerous day and night signals also exist for use by vessels within the canal, again using navigational shapes, code flags and lights, and these in some cases differ from the signals in standard use. Signals of note include non-gas free tankers, LPG/LNG tankers and tankers carrying dangerous chemicals in bulk having to display a ball above a code flag Bravo during the day and a white light over two red lights in vertical line at night. Also a vessel requiring a pilot is to display a ball above a code flag Golf during the day and 3 white lights in a vertical line at night. Some of the signals displayed by dredgers operating within the canal differ from the requirements of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea and deck officers will have to bear this in mind whilst transiting the canal; for example, a dredger will display the side on which it is clear and safe to pass with a cylinder by day, rather than two diamonds, and a white light at the yard arm or two white lights in a vertical line on the bulwark by night, rather than two green lights in a vertical line. Again, for all the various signal used by all types of vessels that may be encountered in the canal the Rules of Navigation will need to be consulted.

Penalty Dues

In certain circumstances a penalty due may be levied on a vessel that does not comply with the requirements of the Rules of Navigation.

If a vessel manoeuvres in the canal or Port Said or Suez waters without a pilot the canal authority will charge an additional due, for manoeuvring in the canal this is presently US\$ 21,500. However, this requirement does not apply if the pilot is for some reason incapacitated and not able to continue his function.

Vessels proceeding in the same direction are not permitted to overtake one another unless

authorised by the canal control office. Violation of this rule will attract an additional due of US\$ 43,000.

The foregoing is not an exhaustive resume of the Suez Canal Authority Rules of Navigation (2007 Edition), merely the highlights with regard to the navigation of vessels through the canal. For the latest requirements of the Suez Canal Authority the latest edition of the Rules of Navigation will have to be consulted ■



For further information on this or other Loss Prevention topics please contact the Loss Prevention Department, Steamship Insurance Management Services Ltd.,

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