COLREGs - WIG Amendments In Force

December 2003

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The amendments to existing Rules include new provisions relating to Wing-in Ground (WIG) craft.

The following are amended:

* Rule 3 (General definitions) - to provide the definition of WIG craft;

* Rule 8 (a) (Action to avoid collision) - to make it clear that any action to avoid collision shall be taken in accordance with the relevant rules in Part B of the COLREGs and shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, be positive, made in ample time and with due regard to the observance of good seamanship;

* Rule 18 (Responsibilities between vessels) - to include a requirement that a WIG craft shall, when taking off, landing and in flight near the surface, keep clear of all other vessels and avoid impeding their navigation and also that a WIG craft operating on the water surface shall comply with the Rules in Part B as a power-driven vessel;

* Rule 23 (Power-driven vessels underway) - to include a new requirement that WIG craft only when taking off, landing and in-flight near the surface shall, in addition to the lights prescribed in paragraph 23 (a) of the Rule, exhibit a high-intensity all-round flashing red light;

* Rule 31 (Seaplanes) - to include a provision for WIG craft;

* Rules 33 and 35 (Equipment for sound signals and sound signals in restricted visibility) - to cater for small vessels;

* Annex I (Positioning and technical details of lights and shapes) - amendments with respect to high-speed craft (relating to the vertical separation of masthead lights); and

* Annex III (Technical details of sound signal appliances) - amendments with respect to whistles and bell or gong to cater for small vessels.

WIG craft Interim guidelines for WIG craft were approved by the Maritime Safety Committee at its 76th session in December 2002; see Ship Design and Equipment.

The Interim guidelines are intended to provide as much guidance as possible to those involved in the design, construction and operation of WIG craft.

WIG craft - which are not covered by the 1994 or 2000 International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft - are supported in their main operational mode solely by aerodynamic forces which enable them to operate at low altitude above the sea surface but without direct contact with the sea. Accordingly, their arrangement, engineering characteristics, design, construction and operation have a high degree of commonality with those of aircraft.

However, WIG craft operate with other waterborne crafts and must utilize the same collision avoidance rules as conventional shipping. The amendments to the Collision Regulations take into account the operational peculiarities of WIG craft.

IMO and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) have agreed that any WIG craft capable of sustained flight outside the influence of ground effect should also be subject to the rules and regulations of ICAO. Other craft, including those with limited "fly-over" capability, should be covered only by the maritime regulatory regime.

IMO - the International Maritime Organization - is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships.


IMO webpage on WIG craft.

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