

Port of London - River Thames



NOTICE TO MARINERS No. 21 of 2010

NAVIGATION THROUGH BRIDGES

Background

It is evident from several incidents and subsequent investigation that some confusion exists as to the application of Rule 9 of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 (ColRegs), this Notice is promulgated to clarify any confusion or ambiguity.

Rule 9 (ColRegs) states that **a vessel proceeding along the course of a narrow channel or fairway shall keep as near to the outer limit of the starboard side of the channel which lies on her starboard side as is safe and practicable.**

A vessel nearing a bend or an area of a narrow channel or fairway where other vessels may be obscured by an intervening obstruction shall navigate with particular alertness and caution and shall sound the appropriate signal prescribed in Rule 34(e). This signal consists of one prolonged blast on the whistle, any approaching vessel that may be within hearing around the bend or behind the intervening obstruction shall answer with one prolonged blast on the whistle.

Note: Port of London River Byelaws 1978 No 2, 3 and 14 make clear the link between the PLA Byelaws and the ColRegs

Application to navigation through bridges

Usually, vessels may safely cross the channel directly and manoeuvre to or from their pier or other location without needing to navigate on the incorrect side of the channel.

Should a vessel **need** to deviate from Rule 9, provision is made within Rule 2, 'Responsibility', for general deviations from the Colregs should they be required by the ordinary practice or seamen, by the **special circumstances of the case or to avoid immediate danger. Such deviations from Rule 9 should only take place when essential for navigation safety purposes.**

Very occasionally, circumstances may exist when vessels need to undertake more complex manoeuvres to or from piers or other locations situated on the opposite side of the channel to their direction of navigation.

In such circumstances, in the interests of navigation safety, the ordinary practice of seamen may determine that it is necessary for vessels to navigate for a more extended period of time on the incorrect side of the channel to complete the manoeuvre safely.

Where such a manoeuvre involves a requirement for a vessel to navigate through a bridge arch against the prevailing direction of traffic the following actions should be taken:

1. The vessel should notify London VTS of their intention to navigate through a bridge arch against the prevailing direction of traffic flow,
2. London VTS is to acknowledge the request and provide relevant traffic information including a read-back broadcast to alert other vessels in the area,
3. The vessel should sound one prolonged blast as described at Rule 34(e) of the Colregs.

Where such a manoeuvre does not involve a bridge transit, the vessel concerned should notify London VTS of their intentions in good time to ensure receipt of relevant traffic information.

In the interests of navigation safety London VTS may arbitrate in the event of conflict or **veto** agreements on priority or passing.

Vessels should not navigate on the incorrect side of the channel or against the prevailing direction of traffic flow in a bridge arch for reasons of convenience or expediency.

21 December 2010

Port of London Authority
London River House
Royal Pier Road
Gravesend, Kent DA12 2BG

**DAVID SNELSON CB FNI
CHIEF HARBOUR MASTER**



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TO RECEIVE FUTURE NOTICES TO MARINERS BY **E-MAIL**,
PLEASE REGISTER VIA OUR WEBSITE www.pla.co.uk

Telephone calls, VHF radio traffic, CCTV and radar traffic images may be recorded in
the VTS Centres at Gravesend and Woolwich.

