This book is based on the 2012 publication: A Code of Practice for Passenger Vessel Operation on the Thames 2012

Produced by The Port of London Authority in consultation with: the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, London River Services, British Marine, the Marine Policing Unit of the Metropolitan Police and the Company of Watermen and Lightermen.

Photographs: PLA archive / Ben Fitzpatrick / Neil Pickford

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This third edition (2016) of the Passenger Vessel Operations Code of Practice for the Tidal Thames is substantially rewritten and redesigned to be user-friendly and give both the operator and master of a passenger vessel guidance on performing in an ever-changing environment with increasing demand on services.

This code of practice has been written to provide both the operator and the mariner a quick reference booklet for passenger vessel operations on the Thames. It does not replace current legislation or regulating bodies but provides a central collection of advice, regulations and best practice.

The code has been written and produced by the Port of London Authority in consultation with London River Services, The Maritime and Coastguard agency, British Marine, Company of Waterman and Lightermen, London Coastguard and the Marine Policing Unit, as well as experienced passenger boat operators and mariners already providing a good standard of safety for staff and passengers on the River Thames.

Operating safely on the Thames is a common goal we all have.

Bob Baker

Chief Harbourmaster, Port of London Authority
Introduction

This Passenger Vessel Operational Code of Practice (PVOpsC) has been written to provide guidance to operators and masters of passenger vessels operating on the tidal Thames. It is written to provide an overview of regulation, advice and best practice and provides commonly agreed safe practices for passenger vessels. Although aimed at vessel operators, masters and crews, it also informs other organisations on how passenger vessels go about their business. It details principles governing safe operation and navigation of all commercially operated passenger vessels, including those carrying twelve or fewer passengers and those operating under the High Speed Craft Code.

This Code does not seek to reproduce the PLA or MCA regulations but simply to make these regulations better understood. All the regulations quoted here should be held on-board and understood by master and crew.

The Port of London Authority has navigational jurisdiction over approximately ninety-five miles from Teddington to the outer Estuary; its regulations cover vessels varying from large container vessels and tankers to rowing craft and residential moorings.

In order to cover such a wide variety of activity the PLA regulations are probably more extensive than for most other ports.

It goes without saying that Col Regs – The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea are the primary, and most important, regulations and the master of any vessel must have a thorough knowledge and instinctive understanding of them.

Notwithstanding the above, in the interests of promoting safety on the River Thames to all river users, masters and owners of all private and recreational craft are encouraged to abide by this code, which advises on Best Practice for Passenger Vessel operations.
A guide to using this Code

This Code is in fact two books in one. It contains information for both vessel operators/owners and vessel masters and has been split into sections pertinent to specific areas of operation. Each section has been colour coded for easy identification. Within each section, information is displayed in one of three ways:

**Operators’ information**
Information shown in black is more pertinent to operators/owners although often also relevant to masters.

**Masters’ information**
Information shown in colour is specific to vessel masters and the on-board crew.

Some terms have been simplified. For instance although there is a quantifiable difference between a ship and a boat but the code simply refers to them all as vessels (unless where specifically used in a title).

All the diagrams are for reference only and should not be used for navigation - they are not charts.

The code has been designed from the standpoint of someone new to Passenger Vessel operations on the Thames, as an introduction to the essential requirements. It should also serve as a checklist for experienced operators and masters. Therefore throughout the document there are references to further documents, websites or contact details which are generally shown in Italics. Weblinks are underlined.

The weblinks used in this document were correct at time of publication but are, by their nature, prone to change. In some instances a generic web address has been supplied and you may have to search on that site for specific details. Please report any dead links via the PLA website.
As an **operator** of a passenger vessel you are legally obliged to comply with a large amount of regulation.

This section identifies the regulators you will face and summarises the regulations you will be expected to comply with. Guidance should be sought from the regulators listed below when operating any passenger vessel on the River Thames.

**PLA**
Port of London Authority

**MCA**
Maritime and Coastguard Agency

**LRS**
London River Services

**Other Agencies**
London Coastguard
Marine Police Unit (MPU)

The PLA is governed by an Act of Parliament called the Port of London Act which gives the Port of London Authority navigational jurisdiction from Teddington to the Outer Estuary. The list opposite indicates where PLA regulations affect **operators and masters** of passenger vessels. Documentation should be readily available to staff, understood by operators and masters and be maintained up to date.

The best source of current, up-to-date information relating to PLA requirements can be found on the website above.

The Harbormaster Upper (HMU) team based in central London are also available to advise on passenger vessel operations.

As **master** of the vessel the documents shown right should be held on-board and you should be familiar with their content and meaning. If you are unfamiliar the operator should provide training on the relevant documentation or seek advice from the Designated Person Ashore (see page 28).

**Other Paperwork to be found on-board**

- Passage plan
- Training records
- Equipment list
- Safety Management System
- Designated Person Ashore’s number
- Emergency Procedures
- Incident report forms
International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea

It is the master's responsibility to ensure that Col Regs are understood and followed, and that those helming the vessel understand their obligations under the rules.

**PLA Byelaws**

The PLA have several byelaws that will impact operations and the most up-to-date edition of Byelaws can be found on the PLA website.

**PLA General Directions**

Operators and masters of passenger vessels should be familiar with the General Directions and a valid up-to-date copy should be held on board the vessel.

**PLA Permanent Notice to Mariners**

The PNs are designed to supplement the above regulations and provide further guidance to safe operations.

**PLA Notice to Mariners**

NtMs indicate areas of works, operations or interest that are not normal daily activities. Operators and masters should be familiar with any Notice which may affect their daily operation.

**Codes of practice**

Supplementary to all of the above the PLA also produce codes of practice such as this one, which operators should be familiar with.

As master of a passenger vessel you have overall responsibility for the vessel, the crew and passengers. There are many regulations that you have to be familiar with and must practise in the day-to-day operation of the vessel.

The operator should support you by supplying the relevant regulations and ways in which you as a master must comply.

This page shows a short list of regulations you should have available to you at any time. They can all be found at:

www.pla.co.uk/Safety/Regulations-and-Guidance
Powers to License Vessels

The PLA has a statutory responsibility under the Port of London Act to inspect and license commercially operated vessels, not licensed by another certifying authority, including passenger vessels carrying 12 or fewer passengers, on the tidal Thames from Teddington to Category D limits in the Estuary. It meets this responsibility by employing qualified Marine Surveyors to administer the vessel licensing system.

The type of small passenger vessels carrying 12 or fewer passengers regulated by the PLA varies considerably; they include executive launches, historic vessels, RIBs and work boats also engaged in carrying fewer than 12 passengers.

Licensing Requirements

Following a recommendation to all licensing authorities by the Marine Accident Investigation Board, the PLA has adopted the Inland Waters Small Passenger Boat Code along with industry good practice as the base requirement for licensing Small Passenger Vessels. The main licensing requirements for vessels inspected under this Code include:

- Hull and Machinery condition and compliance
- Life-saving appliances
- Fire-fighting equipment
- Stability
- First Aid Kit
- Basic SMS

The specific requirements for Small Passenger Boat Licensing can be found on the PLA website.
Powers to License Vessels
The MCA or Class classifies and regulates the build standard of any passenger vessel including the certification of the numbers of passengers a vessel may legally carry. The safety equipment carried on board, the procedures for operations and the company’s Safety Management System (page 27) are inspected regularly by the MCA vessel inspectors. Operators of vessels are advised to make contact with the local MCA Office at the earliest opportunity to discuss the operation, vessel, and regime of inspections and auditing.

The Passenger Certificate
This certificate will be issued by the MCA to any passenger vessel carrying more than 12 passengers and must be displayed on-board by all certified vessels. It must be valid and set out both the crew numbers appropriate for carrying the specified number of passengers and the operational area for which the licence is granted. It is the duty of the master of the vessel to confirm these Passenger Certificate details are satisfied before starting the shift.

The operator of the vessel must ensure that the vessel is fully certificated for the operation and that valid certificates are displayed on-board.
London Vessel Traffic Services
www.pla.co.uk/Safety/Vessel-Traffic-Services-VTS

Teddington to Crayfordness: VHF channel 14
Crayfordness to Seaward Limit: VHF channels 68 & 69
Phone: 020 8855 0315

London Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) is a division of the PLA which operates from two state of the art VTS Centres in Gravesend and at the Thames Barrier. In total a team of 44 VTS fully trained personnel oversee the Port of London’s VTS area on a 24/7 basis 365 days a year.

The aims and objectives of London VTS are to ensure safety of life at sea, to ensure safety and efficiency of navigation, and to protect the marine environment, adjacent shore areas, work sites and offshore installations from the possible adverse effects of maritime traffic.

London Coastguard
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency

Emergencies: VHF channel 16
Non-emergencies: Phone 023 8032 9486
Email: sar.response@mcga.gov.uk

London Coastguard is based in Woolwich and is responsible for coordinating the search and rescue tasking of all London-based assets in an emergency. The duty officers at London Coastguard and London VTS are stationed next to each other and work closely together to coordinate any emergency situation.

As well as coordinating the search and rescue effort they also have access to the Search And Rescue plans produced by operators and submitted to the national maritime centre in Fareham. Vessels with 12 or fewer passengers are not legally required to submit a SAR plan but it is strongly recommended. Contact London Coastguard for further information and guidance.
The Marine Policing Unit (MPU) is based at Wapping. It is there for the public safety and security of the river. They will assist in situations where your crew alone may not be able to and can provide advice on best practice for security.

Police assistance, either on scene or at an arranged berth/wharf/pier should be obtained via London VTS in the first place (see above)

The MPU maintains a continuous listening watch on VHF channel 14. On-board emergency plans should clearly show how to obtain police assistance in your area of operation.

London Fire Brigade (LFB) have two specialist vessels located at Lambeth. These vessels are equipped with fire-fighting and salvage pumps as well as casualty handling areas.

Fire Brigade assistance, either on scene or at an arranged berth/wharf/pier should be obtained via London VTS in the first instance (see above)
The owners of piers may permit passenger boats to embark and disembark passengers via their pier. In order to do this safely the owner of a pier may impose its own regulation and licence on a vessel using the facility.

London River Services (LRS) own and operate the majority of the central London passenger piers. However some are owned and operated privately so, before any passenger transfer takes place, the operator of a passenger vessel should obtain permission from the pier operator and comply with the appropriate regulation.

Also see page 61 for more details about pier operations.
Thames Auto-Identification System (AIS)

Thames AIS is a mandatory aid (Byelaw 12) for all passenger vessels carrying 12 or more passengers between Denton Limit and Richmond Lock. It gives masters improved situational awareness by providing a live traffic image and giving additional warning of other AIS-fitted vessels.

AIS is not a substitute for keeping a good lookout or navigating properly.

The safety benefits of Thames AIS are enhanced by a geographic display unit and ‘persons on-board’ (POB) reporting system. The POB system should be updated immediately whenever changes occur: The figures entered must reflect the numbers of passengers and crew boarding and disembarking the vessel and always accurately record the total number of persons on board.

It is hard to overstate the contribution to safety made by Thames AIS.

AIS Equipment Defects

If the AIS equipment becomes defective, operators must inform the equipment supplier and receive a number for defect rectification. The defect along with rectification number and date of rectification must be passed to London VTS. When the equipment defect has been rectified London VTS must be informed in order to remove the vessel from the defect list. Failure to comply may result in a vessel being prevented from navigating on the river by the Harbormaster.
PLA Byelaw 9 (July 2012) – DRINK OR DRUGS

1. The master of a vessel shall not navigate the vessel when unfit by reason of drink or drugs to do so.

2. The master of a vessel shall not navigate, attempt to navigate or be in charge of a vessel after consuming so much alcohol that the proportion of it in his breath when tested in accordance with paragraph (5) below records a reading of 35 microgrammes of alcohol or more in 100 millilitres of breath.

3. If the harbourmaster has reasonable cause to suspect that the master of a vessel has drugs or alcohol in his body which may impair his fitness to navigate, he may direct the vessel to proceed to a designated berth or mooring or, if already on a berth or mooring, to remain in that position.

4. The harbourmaster may permit a vessel to proceed notwithstanding that the master is suspected of being unfit to navigate through drink or drugs, if the harbourmaster considers that satisfactory arrangements have been made to replace the said master and to ensure safe navigation.

5. A vessel directed under paragraph (3) above shall remain in the position designated until such time as either a substitute master is on board and takes command of the vessel or the master suspected of having alcohol in his body submits to a breath test on equipment provided by the harbourmaster and approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the said breath test indicates a reading of less than 35 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath.

6. It is an offence for the master of a vessel to fail to comply with a direction made under paragraph (3) above.

Alcohol and drugs

Operators of passenger vessels must produce an alcohol and drugs policy for staff and passengers. It is an offence for any crew to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst at work and Operators should ensure that this message is well communicated. If necessary introduce testing and sampling.

It is an offence to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while working on the river.

As master of the vessel it is also your duty to ensure that any crew are also fit for duty and not under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Any suspicion or doubt should be notified immediately to the operator.
Starting the shift

The **master** is at all times responsible for the safety of the crew, but owners are also responsible for ensuring that their vessels are operated without endangering the health and safety of the crew or passengers. The crew should be trained in health and safety matters and particularly on accident prevention.

Crew members should always wear the appropriate safety equipment and in particular, wear life jackets and non-slip safety footwear when working on deck and assisting passengers embarking and disembarking. **Masters** should ensure that safety requirements are enforced and set a good example.

Vessel checks

Before commencing the shift it is the duty of the **master** to check that the vessel is fit for service and that any defects are noted. The vessel should be clean, have enough fuel for the day, be clear of any defects that are classed as critical by the operator and have a fully working PA system and communication system.

The operator should provide a checklist which should be completed and returned in the daily briefing folder (page 16)

Also see work boats (page 19)
Crew safety briefings

At the beginning of each shift it is vital that the Master briefs the crew, especially all catering, hospitality and entertainment staff, on their duties and responsibilities. It is a common misconception that contract catering, hospitality and entertainment staff are not part of the crew. In the event of an emergency the passengers will look to any member of the vessel staff for assistance regardless of whether they are permanent or irregular staff, only working on board for the specific function.

The brief should include:

- Identifying members of the crew and their roles and responsibilities
- The itinerary, outline timing and overall plan for the day or watch
- Location and operation of safety equipment
- The emergency organisation on board, including escape routes
- The crew’s duties in the event of an emergency
- Emphasis on the importance of crew members remaining alert and aware of their surroundings and the activities going on around them

Right: Example of a Captain’s declaration form
Section Contents
1. Daily crew list and master’s declaration
2. Vessel and equipment certificates
3. Log sheets
4. Maintenance and repair schedule
5. Passage Plan / Risk Assessments
6. Special operations orders for the day
7. New Notices to Mariners
8. Operational memoranda

Daily crew list and master’s declaration
Date: ..........................................................
Vessel name: ..................................................
Folder issued by Head of Fleet Operations / Fleet Operations Manager
Signature / Name: ...........................................
Bridge duty crew:
........................................................................
........................................................................
Cabin Duty Crew:
........................................................................
........................................................................
Master’s Daily Declaration – Master:
........................................................................
........................................................................

Above: Example of a muster station diagram
Left: Example of the contents of a Daily Briefing Folder
Life jackets

Crew should set a good example by wearing a life jacket during embarkation and disembarkation.

Appropriate instructions for use of life jackets should be displayed on board.

Life jackets (or buoyancy aids) should be made easily available to any passenger who requests one.

All life jackets (or buoyancy aids) should be suitable for purpose, correctly fitted, correctly stored, well maintained and replaced when necessary. Further information on all aspects of life jackets is available from:


**RYA** - [www.rya.org.uk/infoadvice/safetyinfo/Personalsafetyequipment/Pages/buoyancy.aspx](http://www.rya.org.uk/infoadvice/safetyinfo/Personalsafetyequipment/Pages/buoyancy.aspx)
Health, pollution and the environment

Food hygiene and liquor – see www.hse.gov.uk/catering/
The operator must ensure that if the vessel in operation serves food or drink then the utmost should be done to ensure that the necessary food hygiene standards are applied. All vessels supplying food and drink to the public must be registered as a food premises.

If serving alcohol, an appropriate liquor licence must be obtained from the local authority in which borough (or county) the company is based. The licence must be displayed on-board.

Garbage and waste oil

The operator must ensure that the environment is protected by all available means. Operators will have to produce a Garbage Management Plan and a plan to manage the disposal of oil as well as a policy on protecting the environment (including noise pollution). These should be included in the first section of the SMS.

The waste produced during vessel operations must be removed by a waste carrier licensed by the Environment Agency (EA).

Bunkering (Refuelling) – see Thames Byelaw 8 and PNtM 7

Vessels obviously require fuel in order to operate. Refuelling operations can be hazardous and there is potential for pollution as well as other safety issues. All operators must ensure that they have a robust Bunkering Operational Plan for safe bunkering operations and that all necessary precautions are taken to prevent polluting the river.

Should an incident occur it must be reported immediately to the Harbour Master via London VTS. Oil sheen sightings anywhere on the river should also be reported in the same way.

The Maritime Pollution (MARPOL) guidance can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-pollution-and-reduce-harmful-emissions-at-sea

London Port Health Authority (LPHA)

Emergencies: 07050 389861
Enquiries: 01474 363033
email: porthealth.denton@cityoflondon.gov.uk

The key responsibilities of the LPHA include ensuring the safety of potable water supplied to vessels, dealing with cases of infectious disease on-board ships, issuing ship sanitation certificates, rabies control, dealing with complaints about noise, refuse and other environmental issues.

The Food Safety Team register and inspect all food floating food premises and will take enforcement action where necessary.

Vessel operators should be aware of noise regulations and should check with the LPHA and British Marine for further guidance.
Work boat

An aspect of any operation is the use of work boats which allow crew access to and from passenger boats. Any work boat used by an operator should be licensed by the PLA (or other licensing authority) and the limits and conditions set out on the licence should be adhered to at all times.

Work boat crew should always wear a life jacket. This is compulsory when bulwarks are less than 1m high from the deck. The work boat must be maintained in accordance with the requirements set out in the Thames Freight Standard, or IWSPBC, whichever is appropriate, and be supplied with suitable life-saving and fire-fighting equipment, and a hand-held VHF.

Any vessel used to transport members of the public to a passenger boat for any reason, including viewings, should be appropriately licensed as a passenger boat in its own right.
Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB)

- Good visibility from the helm
- Audible VHF set
- Seating for all passengers with suitable back support for high speed use reflecting details laid out in MAIB Capital Rib report
- Life jackets for all on-board
- Handrails in front of all seats and for passengers to safely access the boat

See pages 40 and 43 for ‘high speed thrill’ restricted areas
Class V

Life rafts or float-free devices refer to MCA for details

Good visibility from wheelhouse refer to Col Regs for details

Stern marking see page 71

Fendering

Guardrails

Vessel name
High speed craft

Good all round visibility from wheelhouse
refer to MCA for details

Amber flashing light

Perry Buoys
refer to MCA for details

Life rafts
refer to MCA for details

Stern marking
see page 71

Anchor
Other passenger vessels

The river Thames is becoming increasingly busy and London remains at the heart of UK tourism interests. As a master of a vessel you should be courteous and co-operative with other passenger vessels and operators. Remember that other passenger vessels are trying to provide the same service as you although they will be working to different timetables and from different piers.

Recreational users

Narrow boats

Passenger vessel masters should be aware that narrow boats often navigate on the Tideway. These vessels, by design, are low powered, have a very low freeboard and can look very small against a busy river background. Narrow boats are not required to carry a VHF set whilst on the Tideway therefore calls may not be heard. Extra caution should be taken when navigating in the vicinity of a narrow boat.

Sailing boats

There are numerous sailing clubs that use the Tidal Thames year round as well as several organised sailing events. Masters should maintain a good lookout at all times and be advised that sailing vessels have a low freeboard and will sometimes manoeuvre in an unpredictable fashion, including tacking across the fairway. Small sailing vessels may not have access to VHF.
Recreational users

Rowing and paddled boats
Boats powered by oars or paddles such as rowing boats, canoes and stand-up paddle boards have minimal freeboard and masters should bear in mind the dramatic effect that wash can have on them. These boats are also particularly small and can be hard to spot and do not carry VHF so maintaining a good lookout is essential.

The area between Putney and Richmond is particularly busy with rowing boats which are obliged to follow a different navigation pattern (working the slacks). This specific rowing navigation also applies between Cherry Garden Pier and Island Jetty.

For details, please refer to www.pla.co.uk/assets/THE_ROWING_CODE.pdf

Codes specific to other recreational vessels can also be found on the PLA website.

As well as a commercial port, transport facility and tourist attraction, the river Thames is also a popular recreational amenity used by both powered-vessels, such as small cruisers or narrow boats and small man-powered boats used for sport and exercise.

In recognition of this the PLA has a dedicated website for all leisure users:

www.boatingonthethames.co.uk

It is recommended that masters of passenger vessels visit this site and note any points that may affect their interaction with leisure craft.

Recreational use of the Thames by man-powered boats is mostly, but not exclusively, restricted to the parts of the river above Chelsea Bridge and below Tower Bridge.

Small man-powered boats do not usually carry VHF so maintaining a good lookout is essential.
In order to operate safely, an operator of a passenger vessel must comply with either

**The International Safety Management Code (ISM)**
or

**The Domestic Safety Management Code (DSMC)**

and

**Inland Waters Small Passenger Boat Code (IWSPBC)**

Safety Management System (SMS)

ISM and DSMC are administered by the MCA who will advise on the appropriate code for the type of operation. Full details of these codes are not listed in this document but further information can be found via the MCA at:


Search for MSN 1869 (M)

For passenger vessels carrying 12 or fewer passengers and licensed by the PLA, a Safety Management System (SMS) developed in line with the IWSPBC should be developed and maintained or operate under a PLA Code of Conduct. The requirements of the SMS are outlined on page 27.

In principle all of the above have the same objectives (see panel left).
Audits and audit trails

In order to ensure that the safety codes are working well and understood by all, operators should endeavour to conduct an internal audit of their system at least once every year or in accordance with their appropriate codes.

The internal audit should be an honest assessment of the company’s safety procedures and the capabilities of its crew. Any findings in the audit should be reported to the Designated Person Ashore (page 28) senior management and if necessary the board so that recommendations for improvement can be made and actions taken to address the shortfalls.

External audits.

As well as internal audits the MCA and PLA will conduct audits of their own to ensure compliance with regulation and the SMS as written by the operator. The audit report will be shared with the operator to provide feedback about shortfalls.

For further details on DSMC auditing please refer to MGN 536 and MSN 1869 by searching at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency

Right: Example of a MCA survey/audit checklist
Safety Management System (SMS)

The SMS is a tool used to help keep people, vessels and the environment safe. It encourages the development of a safety culture where safety becomes second nature.

A safety culture involves everyone from deckhand to a vessel's owner. Everyone is responsible.

An SMS includes a set of documents about how a vessel is operated safely and how risks are controlled. It provides information about:

- How a company and vessel(s) operate on a day-to-day basis
- What happens if there is an emergency on a vessel, for example, a fire or a person overboard
- A vessel, what she does and where she operates
- The Designated Person Ashore (DPA) including their contact details (see panel opposite)
- How things are done on a vessel, who does what, how they do it and when
- How hazards are identified and assessed and how risks are managed
- How records on what happens on a vessel are kept
- How crew are trained and drills conducted

A robust Safety Management System must be produced and maintained by the operator but understood by all working on board a vessel.

An SMS should consist of the following:

- A health and safety and environment protection policy
- Lines of communication within the company from “ship to shore”
- A Designated Person Ashore
- Procedures for vessels and equipment maintenance
- Training of staff and SMS procedures
- Procedures for handling an emergency situation
- Procedures for reporting accidents and near misses
- Procedures for auditing and complying with the code

From the SMS a series of check lists and procedures should be made, a few examples of which can be seen opposite

For further guidance please contact the MCA or Local Harbour Master, as appropriate.

Also see Crew Safety section page 47
Check lists, briefing folders and shipboard plans

The SMS will lead to a checklist for the crew of the vessel to check and complete each day, an example of which is shown below:

- Daily crew list and master’s declaration
- Vessel and equipment certificates
- Log sheets
- Maintenance and repair schedule
- Passage Plan / Risk Assessments
- Special operations orders for the day
- New Notices to Mariners
- Operational memoranda

Designated Person Ashore (DPA)

A requirement of the DMSC, ISM and SMS is that an operator should have a Designated Person Ashore (DPA).

The role of the DPA is to ensure the safe operation of each vessel and to provide a link between the operator and those on board. Every operator, as appropriate, should designate a person or persons ashore having direct access to the highest level of management.

The responsibility and authority of the designated person or persons should include monitoring the safety and pollution prevention aspects of the operation of each vessel and ensuring that adequate resources and shore-based support are applied, as required.

Ideally, a notice, such as in the example below, should be posted in the wheelhouse with the DPA contact details.

In case of an emergency or upon discovering a safety fault of any kind, please contact your DPA

Name  ................................................................................

Number  ................................................................................
In order to comply with the appropriate regulations, the table indicates the essential qualifications to be held by a master and other crew members of a passenger vessel operating on the Tideway.

### General Direction 18

**Persons on the Bridge**

There shall be, on the bridge of a power driven vessel underway in the Thames, either the Master of the vessel or a member of the crew who is capable of taking charge of the vessel.

### MSN 1823

**PLA Bylaw 22**

Lists specific details of qualifications required by vessel masters operating on the Thames.

**www.gov.uk/guidance/inland-waterways-types-of-vessels#uk-inland-waterways-passenger-ships**

### General Direction 18

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### Boat Master’s Licence (BML)

The BML is a qualification issued by the MCA after successful examination of the candidate. For more information contact: mo_orpington_admin@mcga.gov.uk

### Local Knowledge Endorsement (LKE)

The LKE may be issued by the PLA following a successful examination of the candidate. For more information contact: LKE@pla.co.uk

### Other qualifications, certificates and training

- IOSH Managing Safety certificate
- Working in Confined Space certificate
- High Speed Craft qualifications

The table opposite is a guideline to the qualifications, certificates and training required by different members of the crew. The table is not definitive and there may be other requirements which are specific to different operations. For example:

- Additional qualifications for vessels carrying 250 people will require a master with the Large Passenger Vessel Endorsement and further qualifications are also required to master High Speed Craft, see page 31 for further details.

The endorsements shown in the table opposite are gained through time and experience and issued by the MCA. For example, a vessel carrying 250 people will require a master with the Large Passenger Vessel Endorsement and further qualifications are also required to master High Speed Craft, see page 31 for further details.

- IOSH Managing Safety certificate
- Working in Confined Space certificate
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- Working in Confined Space certificate
- High Speed Craft qualifications

The table opposite is a guideline to the qualifications, certificates and training required by different members of the crew. The table is not definitive and there may be other requirements which are specific to different operations. For example:

- Additional qualifications for vessels carrying 250 people will require a master with the Large Passenger Vessel Endorsement and further qualifications are also required to master High Speed Craft, see page 31 for further details.

The endorsements shown in the table opposite are gained through time and experience and issued by the MCA. For example, a vessel carrying 250 people will require a master with the Large Passenger Vessel Endorsement and further qualifications are also required to master High Speed Craft, see page 31 for further details.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role / Job Title</th>
<th>Internal training</th>
<th>External Certification</th>
<th>External Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pier Induction</td>
<td>Vessel Induction</td>
<td>Type rating / vessel familiarisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATE</td>
<td>E E E E E R R n/a</td>
<td>E E E E E E E E E E</td>
<td>E R R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEER</td>
<td>E E E E n/a n/a n/a</td>
<td>E R E E E R E E E R</td>
<td>E R R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECKHAND</td>
<td>E E n/a E n/a n/a</td>
<td>E R E E E R E E E R</td>
<td>E R R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>E E n/a E n/a n/a</td>
<td>R R R R R R R R E</td>
<td>R R R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The definition of **High Speed Craft (HSC)** is given in the IMO International Code of Safety for High Speed Craft (the HSC Code).

Speed alone is not the criterion for HSC classification; it is a mix of displacement and operating speed. The Code is a comprehensive set of requirements for high-speed craft, including equipment, conditions for operation and maintenance. It includes very detailed requirements and HSC compliant high-speed craft are deemed also to be complying with the *International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea* (SOLAS) chapters I to IV and regulation V (12) (Shipborne navigational equipment). HSC must also comply with other applicable requirements in the SOLAS and ISM Codes.

The HSC Code is based on the management and reduction of risk as well as passive protection in the event of an accident. Risk is managed through accommodation arrangements, active safety systems, restricted operation, quality management and human factors, along with engineering.
Certificate of Compliance (CoC)

In order to exceed the mandatory speed limit between Wandsworth Bridge and Lambeth Bridge and/or St Saviour's Dock and Margaretness, under the provisions of Thames Byelaw 16, a certificate of compliance issued by the PLA is required. The criteria for the issue of a PLA CoC have been developed following a risk assessment, and encompass the relevant principles and elements of:

- **International Safety Management (ISM) Code**
- **Small Commercial Vessel (SCV) Code**

and where appropriate,

- **Inland Waters Small Passenger Boat Code** (IWSPBC) and Thames Freight Standard

The CoC may be issued following either the completion of an applicable PLA inspection, or after the provision to the PLA of evidence of HSC compliance from another recognised surveying authority.

Vessels holding a Certificate of Compliance will be subject to an annual PLA CoC Inspection, which addresses the following broad criteria:

- The overall condition and stability of the vessel (unless a valid MCA or PLA licence is provided)
- The provision and operation of all on-board equipment, including navigational equipment
- Auditing of the safety management system manual, including manning requirements, risk assessment, training and effective passage planning
- Evidence of an appropriate vessel maintenance program
- The management and procedures in place for passenger embarking, disembarking and containment

Detailed inspection criteria relating to the PLA CoC inspection are available from the PLA Vessel Licensing department (page 7)
General Direction 8 (3)
Passage Planning

In particular, operators and masters of commercial vessels should recognise that “All commercial vessels normally operating only in the Thames shall

(a) prepare and maintain a generic Port Passage Plan, appropriate for use during the vessel’s routine passage and operations in the Thames

(b) as appropriate to their operational area and as part of their generic Port passage plan, establish through risk assessment, safe air draft and under keel clearances to be applied during the vessel’s transits of the Thames bridges

All such Port Passage plans may be inspected by the Harbourmaster”

Port Passage Plan (PPP)

Passenger vessels should be well prepared for operating in a busy waterway that is at times restricted, crossed by narrow bridges, dynamic and heavily affected by the tide. In order to be prepared a passage plan for each journey should be produced and held on-board.

Passage plans should be read and understood by all persons in charge of a vessel and those who may helm a vessel.

They should also be submitted to the Harbourmaster before commencement of any new or expansion of existing operations and communicated to crew members.

Waiting for a space at a pier can contribute to congestion. Operators should take that into account as well as recommendations designed to prevent waiting in the main navigational channel.

See diagrams on pages 41 and 42.

A passage plan requires the minimum of the following:

- The basic route to be taken
- Areas sensitive to wash and recommended revolutions and speed so as to overcome excessive wash
- List of bridges on the voyage and the maximum height of tide for each arch that can be used.
- Areas of reduced depth and tidal limitations
- A list of obstructions along the route of which to be cautious
- An understanding of other operations and river users who will be met while in transit
- Understanding of current river works, NTM’s and operational issues within the area to be navigated
- Weather conditions

Template Port Passage Plans are available from the PLA.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cuckold’s Point</th>
<th>Old Surrey Docks Entrance</th>
<th>High Speed craft rounding Cuckold’s Point.</th>
<th>Limehouse Marina entrance, recreational craft &amp; narrow boats.</th>
<th>Shadwell Basin, sailing vessels &amp; small craft.</th>
<th>PLA 319</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Surrey Docks Entrance</td>
<td>Cherry Garden Pier</td>
<td>Old Surrey Entrance reporting point for applicable vessels inward.</td>
<td>Woods/Tunnel Pier</td>
<td>Wapping Police Pier</td>
<td>PLA 319 PLA 318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Garden Pier</td>
<td>Tower Bridge</td>
<td>Hermitage Wharf</td>
<td>Downing’s Roads</td>
<td>Wapping Refueller</td>
<td>PLA 318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HMS President</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Butler’s Wharf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Katherine’s Pier</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Katherine’s Pier, Class Vs manoeuvring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OUTWARD BOUND**

**ZEPHYROS**

VOYAGES

Date of Passage

**INWARD BOUND**

Port of London Generic Passage Plan

**WATERLOO BRIDGE**

Headway above M.H.W.S. | 8.5m. | 8.5m. | 8.5m.
Width of Arches at M.H.W.S. | 70.4m. | 72.5m. | 72.5m.

- **Waterloo Bridge Outward Bound, EXTREME CAUTION**
- **INWARD BOUND TUGS & TOWS MUST USE NO3! CHECK ISOPHASE & AIS**
- Festival Pier, Class Vs berthing and manoeuvring
- Savoy Pier, Class Vs berthing and manoeuvring
- Embankment Pier, Class Vs and Clippers berthing and manoeuvring
- Charing Cross Bridge, DO NOT USE No.1 Inward. Outward vessels use this arch for Embankment Pier, RIB operations at upper end.
**Bridge marking – looking upriver / inbound**

- **Three red discs or lights in an inverted triangle:**
  Arch closed to navigation, do not proceed through this arch

- **Flashing white light:**
  Large vessel using this arch, do not impede the vessel transiting

- **No markings:**
  Not a main working arch. May be used but is outside the authorised channel and may be shallow

- **A bale of straw or single white light:**
  Arch has reduced headroom

- **Two amber lights side-by-side:**
  Main working arch, usually within the authorised channel

- **Authorised Channel (Fairway)**

Arches are numbered # from the north bank
Calculating Bridge Clearances

Under keel clearance = (CHART DATUM + Tide rise) – Vessel draught + Safety [*usually 1.0m]*

Air clearance = (Bridge Height – Tide rise) – Air draught [*usually 0.7m on ebb, 1.0m on flood*]

[*these are minimum safe limits*]
Between Isleworth Ferry Gate and Putney Pier, rowing boats are obliged to follow the Rowing Code (i.e. working the slacks against the ebb tide) and not navigate according to Col Regs.
Rowing boats may use the stretch between Putney Bridge and Chelsea Bridge without informing London VTS but should navigate according to Col Regs and avoid this area 2 hours either side of high tide.

In the High Speed Zone between Wandsworth Bridge and Lambeth Bridge, RIBs may not perform any ‘high speed thrill’ manoeuvres.
In the High Speed Zone between Wandsworth Bridge and Lambeth Bridge, RIBs may not perform any ‘high speed thrill’ manoeuvres.
In the High Speed Zone below Shadwell Basin, RIBs may perform ‘high speed thrills’ such as S-turns or bucket drops (but not doughnuts or U-turns) but they must remain on the starboard side of the channel.

RIBs may not perform any ‘high speed thrill’ manoeuvres in these marked sections.

Between Cherry Garden Pier and Island Jetty, rowing boats are obliged to follow the Rowing Code (i.e. working the slacks against the ebb tide) and not navigate according to Col Regs.

St. Saviour’s Dock to Blackwall Point
Tide permitting, vessels leaving Westminster Pier should proceed through Westminster Bridge before turning outbound.

**Westminster Bridge**

**Westminster Palace**

**Westminster Pier**

**Waterloo Pier**

**Authorised Channel**

**Recommended Inbound Waiting Zone for Westminster Pier**

**Recommended Outbound Waiting Zone for Westminster Pier**

**Recommended Outbound Waiting Zone for Waterloo Pier**

**12 Knot Speed Limit**

**Westminster and Waterloo Piers**
PASSAGE PLANNING

NO WAITING ZONE
If clear - do not obstruct the pier

RECOMMENDED INBOUND WAITING ZONE
Wait here if INBOUND WAITING ZONE is full

RECOMMENDED OUTBOUND WAITING ZONE
Vessels should proceed through Tower Bridge before turning inbound for Tower pier

Tower Pier / Upper Pool

TOWER OF LONDON

Traitor’s Gate

TOWER MILLENNIUM PIER

HMS BELFAST

CITY HALL

TOWER BRIDGE

Authorised Channel

Wait here if INBOUND WAITING ZONE is full

Authorised Channel
In the High Speed Zone below Shadwell Basin, RIBs may perform ‘high speed thrills’ such as S-turns or bucket drops (but not doughnuts or U-turns) but they must remain on the starboard side of the channel.

RIBs may not perform any ‘high speed thrill’ manoeuvres in these marked sections.

Between Cherry Garden Pier and Island Jetty, rowing boats are obliged to follow the Rowing Code (i.e. working the slacks against the ebb tide) and not navigate according to Col Regs.
The Thames Barrier Control Zone (TBCZ) exists between Blackwall Point and Margaretness. All vessels within this area are subject to controlled navigation including entering or transiting the zone, and overtaking, manoeuvring or mooring within it. All vessels with VHF radio navigating within the TBCZ should communicate their intentions to London VTS on channel 14. No vessel should transit the barrier without first being allocated a navigational span by London VTS.

Navigation in restricted visibility
In poor visibility, navigation through the Thames Barrier is subject to various restrictions depending on the size of the vessel.

For specific details please refer to PLA General Direction 27 (3)
General Direction 12
Navigational Risk Assessment – Marine Operations

“As well as a robust Safety Management System (page 27) part of the planning process to minimise the potential impact of an incident and to improve the safety of all employees and passengers, a risk assessment for all operations should be carried out by the operator. In order to write a risk assessment operators should where possible:

• Undertake to train crews in creating risk assessments
• Identify all potential hazards expected during the operation
• Determine how to minimise the risks of the identified hazards
• Use experience and prior learning where possible to prove the minimisation of hazards

A register of all risk assessments should be held by the operator and these should be amended and corrected where necessary to always reduce the risk of facing a hazard. Risk assessments should be reviewed annually, after any incident, or when the operator deems it necessary.

Note:
Vessels which fall outside the scope of the PLA navigational safety management system or, in the opinion of the Harbourmaster, may cause a risk to navigational safety shall be subjected to a formal risk assessment before entering or operating further in the Thames. Refer to the full General Directions for more information.

Navigational Risk Assessment (NRA)

As well as a robust Safety Management System (page 27) part of the planning process to minimise the potential impact of an incident and to improve the safety of all employees and passengers, a risk assessment for all operations should be carried out by the operator. In order to write a risk assessment operators should where possible:

• Undertake to train crews in creating risk assessments
• Identify all potential hazards expected during the operation
• Determine how to minimise the risks of the identified hazards
• Use experience and prior learning where possible to prove the minimisation of hazards

A register of all risk assessments should be held by the operator and these should be amended and corrected where necessary to always reduce the risk of facing a hazard. Risk assessments should be reviewed annually, after any incident, or when the operator deems it necessary.
## Navigational Safety Risk Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAZARD</th>
<th>Relevance to Operations</th>
<th>UNMITIGATED</th>
<th>MITIGATED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Collision with Class V Passenger Vessel</td>
<td>Class V activity essential and likely to increase, increased hazard from high speed vessels and possibly also specialist craft such as DUKWs and RIBs</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Collision with tug and tow</td>
<td>Essential commercial activity and likely to increase substantially</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Collision with other unpowered small craft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Collision with other unpowered small craft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESULT** Make it safe (within ALARP) for small leisure vessels to navigate on the Tideway?
Shift and watch duration
It is vital for vessel safety that the operator should provide adequate breaks for the crew of a vessel so that they do not exceed the working time directive as laid down in Marine Safety Notices issued by the MCA. The most current notice can be found [here](#).

**General Direction 18**
**Persons on the Bridge**
There shall be, on the bridge of a power driven vessel underway in the Thames, either the Master of the vessel or a member of the crew who is capable of taking charge of the vessel.

**Crew safety**

**Operators** are responsible for ensuring that the vessel can be operated without endangering health or safety of the crews and passengers. The operator should ensure that the master has adequate tools meet to his or her responsibilities, is fit for duty, understands the company’s Safety Management Systems ([page 27](#)), is fully aware of the vessel’s limitations and characteristics and is qualified/type-rated for the vessel class in question.

Members of crew should be duly qualified for the duties which they undertake ([pages 29 and 30](#)) and an appropriate familiarisation training scheme should be delivered by the operator to any person working on a vessel.

The **master** of a vessel is responsible at all times for the safety of the crew, the environment within which they work and passengers on board.

The mate of a vessel should be a competent hand and should be able to helm the vessel without instruction so as to relieve the master where appropriate (see panels left).

An apprentice or trainee may only helm a vessel under direct control of the master, and must not helm the vessel in the absence of the master.

The crew who work in the cabin or have other duties should have a full understanding of their duties, be fully familiar with the vessel’s life saving and fire fighting appliances and be regularly drilled in on-board emergencies.
Crew training and recording

The SMS manual should have a section which includes training and recording of training drills.

It is the duty of the operator to ensure that all members of staff are trained adequately in the role they carry out on board and that training is current and relevant.

The following is a list with a few examples of suitable training to be carried out for all staff. The list is not exhaustive and a more comprehensive training schedule can be found in the SMS manual for individual operators.

- Man overboard
- Fire or explosion on-board
- Loss of steering
- Loss of propulsion
- Collision
- Casualty on board
- Violent behaviour

Once training has been carried out it should be logged appropriately in a record which is then held on board.

The master should check the training records for each member of the crew on a daily basis to ensure that all of the crew are current and up-to-date.

If any if the crew’s records are out-of-date the Designated Person Ashore (page 28) should be informed and suitable training arranged immediately.

Left: crew should be well turned-out in a uniform with suitable footwear – and life jacket when appropriate
Crew Drills

Emergency fire and evacuation drills for the crew should be held on board at regular intervals. Each member of each crew should participate in evacuation, fire and damage control drills. For each sort of emergency, flooding following collision or grounding, fire etc it is useful to stage training through the four steps described below:

- **Communications Exercises**: a simple check that all communications function correctly.
- **Table-top Exercises**: an essential step, particularly useful for testing the organisational and coordination aspects of an emergency response, also useful for involving senior management. As these exercises encourage discussion they often bring up new considerations and so test the response.
- **Walk-through Exercises**: similar in philosophy to the communications exercises, these exercises enable people to ‘walk through’ their functions and roles in a thoroughly benign environment with no pressure. Walk-through exercises achieve the following two significant purposes:
  - To ensure that people know exactly what to do.
  - Most importantly perhaps, give them confidence that they know how to do it.

Such exercises may simply be operating fire-fighting and damage control equipment, turning out oil spill containment equipment, walking through evacuation routes. Ideally, each part of an exercise or anticipated emergency is ‘walked through’.
Crew Drills

- **Full Scale Exercise:** needs careful planning to replicate or simulate a ‘real-life’ incident or emergency as closely as is safe and practicable. Such simulations should include instruction and operation of the craft’s evacuation, fire and damage control appliances and systems.

- **Evacuation Drills:** Evacuation drill scenarios should vary each week so that different emergency conditions are simulated. They should include:
  - Summoning crew to muster stations with the alarm and ensuring that they know the order to abandon craft specified in the muster list.
  - Reporting to stations and preparing for duties described in the muster list.
  - Checking that crew are suitably dressed.
  - Checking that life jackets are correctly donned.
  - Operation for launching life rafts.
  - Testing of emergency lighting for mustering and abandonment.
  - Giving instructions in the use of the craft’s life-saving appliances.

Emergency instructions including a general diagram of the craft showing the location of all exits, evacuation routes, emergency equipment, life-saving equipment and appliances and illustration of life jacket donning should be available to each crew member.

Exercise scenarios can include but not be limited to the following:

- Fire in all sections of the vessel, particularly machinery spaces.
- Passenger management and human factors in emergencies.
- Rescue of people from the water, man overboard and multiple survivors.
- First Aid procedures and passenger care following an evacuation.
- Procedures following grounding.
- Failure of machinery and electrical supply.
- Pollution Prevention and response to a shipboard pollution incident.
- Security incident on-board (See Security Guidance, page 76).
- Going to anchor.
- Steering gear failures.

Exercises should be imaginative and include discussion and debriefs so that participants can debate the effectiveness of emergency procedures and systems and identify other additional or new potential emergency shipboard situations.
Passenger safety is paramount to a good operation.
The master has overall responsibility for the passengers and crew carried on-board a vessel, however the operator should engage with the crew in order to adopt guidance and implement best practices.

The vessel should be safety checked, clean and ready for service before any passengers embark for the journey, adequate time should be allowed to prepare the vessel before commencement of service.

Passenger safety

Passenger safety is of paramount importance to the industry.
The master has overall responsibility for the safety of the vessel, passengers and crew, but he is not the only person with responsibilities:

Everyone concerned with the operations of vessels has at least some responsibility for the safety of the vessel, passengers and crew.

The split in responsibility between the master and the person in charge of catering and hospitality staff should be made clear to all employees and form part of vessel operator’s (or owner) policy.

There is no magic formula and common sense is probably the best safety tool that we have.

- In all activities: Stop! Think!
- Follow set procedures, do not accept sub-standard equipment – report it!
- Familiarise yourself with the established procedures, risk assessments and put them into practice.
- Encourage a culture of “not walking by” and learn from near misses and accidents.
Human error is the root cause of the vast majority of marine accidents. Operators should minimise the potential for error through training, thorough briefing and exercising. The aims should be: to minimise poor or incorrect decision-making; to familiarise people with safety equipment, safety measures and emergency procedures; and to adopt common safe working practices. Be on your guard against complacency.

**Adequate communication between the master and the crew by whatever means should be possible at all times.**

Once passengers are embarked, vessel design features such as built-in buoyancy and notices advising of safe routes and location of safety equipment etc, should keep passengers safe from most hazards. The crew should ensure that the entry ports are properly secured and access to non-public spaces is restricted. All crew members should watch passengers closely and be alert to anybody likely to do something foolish or dangerous, particularly if they appear to be under the influence of drink or drugs, or appear to be ill.

**Personal Communications**

Devices such as personal mobile phones, laptops, tablets and other similar electrical equipment should not be used when they may cause distraction from navigating a vessel or other vessel duties.

Authorised areas may be agreed for their use and appropriate signage should be displayed.

*Notices to Mariners and Marine Guidance Notices issued by the PLA provide further, up-to-date detail regarding this issue.*

**Commentary**

If a commentary is being conducted during the voyage, it should be done outside the wheel house in order to avoid distracting the master / helm of the vessel.
Arrival and disembarkation

Arriving at a Pier

When arriving at the pier and before disembarking any passengers, a safety announcement should be made in English.

Ideally vessel operators should supply either a written text of the message or a pre-recording to be used over the public address system.

The master or person navigating the vessel should not be distracted by simultaneously attempting to conduct passenger safety briefings and/or public commentaries.

An example of a typical pre-arrival announcement:

“We will shortly be arriving at [location]. Please remain seated while we come alongside the pier as the boat may move unexpectedly. When securely alongside I will invite you to disembark from the vessel. Please use the handrails at all times”

On arrival at a pier the master and crew should ensure that the vessel is secured alongside with at least two mooring lines (unless otherwise agreed by the Harbourmaster and/or MCA) and that the gap between pier and vessel is as small as possible. Only once the vessel is safely moored alongside should disembarkation or embarkation commence.
Once all passengers are embarked, the number of passengers and crew must be entered into the AIS/POB before the vessel departs the pier.

The number entered into the AIS/POB system (see page 12) must truly reflect the total number of crew and passengers on board. Therefore a designated crew member should count all passengers that embark and disembark the vessel. A counting device should be used to ensure an accurate passenger count.

Other crew members should aid all passengers during embarkation to ensure that trips, slips and falls are prevented and to guide passengers to the appropriate location on board.
Departure

Departing from a Pier

Before Departure, a safety announcement should be made, in English, briefing passengers about safety and emergency procedures.

Ideally vessel operators should supply either a written text of the message or a pre-recording to be used over the public address system.

The master or person navigating the vessel should not be distracted by simultaneously attempting to conduct passenger safety briefings and/or public commentaries.

Pre-departure safety briefings should be relevant to the particular vessel and include:

- Fire prevention
- Protection of limbs
- Effect of passenger movement on boat stability

The briefing should also contain verbal instructions and demonstrations, providing passengers with specific information to prepare and guide them in the event of an emergency.

Passengers must be made aware of the location of life jackets closest to their position on the vessel and the survival craft they should board if the vessel has to be abandoned.

An example of a typical pre-departure announcement”

“Welcome on board. I am Captain [name] of [vessel name]. This vessel is shortly due to leave the pier for [location]. In the event of an emergency please follow instructions from the crew. There are enough life jackets on board for all passengers which are located [where]. Please familiarise yourself with the safety information located around the vessel.”
Additionally, instruction on the location and use of personal protection equipment, vessel safety equipment, and distress equipment is also mandatory. 

**Merchant Shipping Notices M1386 and 1409** contain very specific information and should be fully understood and followed. Search for them at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency

Information cards or posters may be used to supplement the briefing, but should not replace the announcement. The public address system should cover all areas where passengers and crew have access, escape routes and places of evacuation into survival craft.

Emergency instructions including a general diagram of the craft showing exit locations, evacuation routes and emergency and life-saving equipment should be available to passengers.

Keep passengers safe by keeping them informed:

- Signs showing Muster Stations and directions to the Muster Stations
- Exit and Emergency escape signs
- Passenger emergency instruction notices
- Public Address systems
- Draw passengers’ attention to passenger emergency instruction notices.
Access

Passenger Access Points
Passenger access points, both aboard the ship and ashore on the pier, should be well lit at night and in poor visibility and marked with high visibility tape or paint. The edges of the deck and the pier at the access points should be highly visible so that any gap between the ship and pier is obvious. Additionally, these areas should be treated with slip-resistant coatings.

Handrails
Hand rails should be of a suitable height to allow passengers to adequately brace themselves while using the stairs, or in the event of an incident.

Posters or notices in the stairwell should also indicate the requirement to use handrails at all times to guard against unexpected movements of the vessel.
Access

Stairwells and Handrails

The construction of the stairwell can help to reduce the likelihood and consequence of a person falling. Stairwells should ideally be of a suitable width so that both handrails can be comfortably reached. Where this can’t be achieved it is recommended that a centre rail is installed.

It can be dangerous for passengers to loiter on or around stairwells while vessels are underway, particularly during manoeuvres, such as berthing alongside a pier. The use of bar staff or other crew to monitor these areas should be considered and accompanied by safety announcements advising passengers to use the handrails at all times when using stairs. Whenever there is a risk of sudden movements by the vessel, or a heavy contact from coming alongside a pier, passengers should be advised to remain seated.
Boarding ramps/Gangways

Some operators use boarding ramps to aid the embarkation and disembarkation process. If these ramps are used then crew members should always ensure that the vessel is securely moored and the gangway suitably manned. Gangway operating procedures should be laid down and incorporated into the SMS.

Gangway structure should be lightweight alloy material and counter-balanced to facilitate ease of use by the crew.

The vessel operator’s (or owner) policy should state how it expects its vessel masters to moor when transferring passengers. The main aim should be to provide passengers with ‘step-free’ access to and from the vessel; they should not have to stretch or step up or down when boarding or leaving the vessel. Ideally, the whole length of the vessel should lie alongside the pier (if appropriate) and be secured by a minimum of two lines (unless otherwise agreed) and a gangway provided. But, on the Thames, many piers are too short to allow the full length of a vessel alongside; if so, additional precautions should be considered.

On smaller vessels carrying 12 or fewer passengers, mooring and passenger embarkation/disembarkation arrangements may differ, but should be fully risk assessed and be safe and appropriate for the location and circumstances.

When using gangways the following considerations are important:

- Does the gangway allow reduced mobility access? If being used by wheelchairs, both the width of the gangway and its gradient must be fit for purpose.
- The crew must ensure passengers do not bunch-up on the gangway.
- Be aware of wash from passing vessels.
- As always, at least one crew member suitably equipped with life jacket and safety footwear should attend the gangway to assist passengers.
- Have a slip-resistant walkway.
- Have handrails incorporated and be tested and frequently certificated.
- Be well lit, easily accessible, free from obstructions and clear of trip hazards.
- Be frequently checked for any signs of wear or deficiencies.
- When in use, secure the gangway on the pier-side only, allowing the vessel-side to move with the vessel’s motion. Stow gangway when not in use.
- Is there an Risk Assessment in place and is it current?
Disability and access

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995/2005 states that “a person has a disability for the purposes of The Act if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

The operator’s SMS should include pier and vessel access guidance for the disabled and those with reduced mobility.

As well as people with physical disabilities and those in wheelchairs, reduced mobility also includes speech, hearing or sight limitations and mental health problems. It also includes the elderly and parents with young children (who are being carried or in a pushchair).

For specific details, search here for MSN 1789(M), MGN 306(M) and MGN 31(M)

As well as these detailed references, consider the following general points:

- Does the pier have specific disabled facilities such as additional handrails, wider passageways, lifts etc?
- If not, assess whether the passenger can safely move around the pier.
- Also consider whether the passenger can get onto and off the vessel with reasonable assistance from their carer, the vessel crew or pier staff (this includes guiding and advising but excludes manual lifting and hoisting those in wheel chairs or push chairs)
- If the vessel master or pier controller considers passenger safety may be compromised then polite but firm refusal must be given together with a reason
- Ensure the limitations for hosting disabled or reduced mobility passengers are clearly stated on signs and in ticket booking terms and conditions. Limitations might include such items as vessel design or ramp angle at low tide
Pier Operations

In the Port of London numerous piers are located between Woolwich and Teddington, many owned and operated by London River Services (LRS), part of Transport for London (TfL). Others are privately owned and operated.

LRS piers operate to defined rules and standards, but privately owned piers will have variations; nevertheless this Code establishes the best practice agreed by the industry and regulators and should be adopted eventually by all. Many piers are fully managed and controlled whilst others, generally towards the west of London, are open and in many cases are not piers at all but private and public moorings and jetties installed at or on the bank.

Irrespective of ownership, the guidance and principles described herein should apply to all pier and jetty operations.

Passenger vessels use the various piers according to their ownership and licence arrangements; LRS for example issue a licence for use by passenger boat operators. Others are used by their owners or by third parties with permission and subject to individual agreements.

Design and Installation

Passenger vessels and piers are generally well managed, safe environments, and risks associated with their design and operation are mitigated by safety conscious processes and actions. The following list is not exhaustive but provides a guide:

- Design and installation should be based upon risk assessment
- The pier must be fit for purpose
- Suitable rescue equipment must be located on the pier, be accessible and be properly maintained
- Pier staff should be suitably trained in the use of all safety/rescue equipment fitted on the pier
- Wherever possible there should be a ‘Help Point’ or source of guidance where any person in difficulty may contact a source of assistance
- The pier structure should be checked regularly for serviceability, particularly for security to the shore and watertight integrity
- Pier fendering and securing arrangements should be frequently inspected and maintained in good working order
- Bollards and cleats should be inspected and the maximum permitted loading must be known
Gates and fog chains

Pier gates are generally a steel frame with close mesh, forming part of the steel fence or barrier that is fitted at every extremity of a pier. Gates are fitted at various vessel access points along the water’s edge allowing access to the vessel when moored alongside and otherwise latched securely.

Fog chains, which are less common now, were the original safety barrier fitted to piers and jetties. They comprise wood or steel posts mounted at intervals along the water’s edge between which are fitted one, two or three chains forming a barrier to the water.
Mooring

Vessels should moor in the berth formally allocated by the pier operator.

Passengers should be warned by an announcement over the PA system that the vessel is shortly to moor at the pier, and that they are to remain seated until the vessel is securely moored, in order to reduce the risk of possible injury during the mooring operation (page 53).

Visual or verbal contact between the person manoeuvring the vessel and the crew is essential during mooring operations.

Mooring arrangements will vary between vessels due to design but the fundamental principles of mooring are similar:

- A safe mooring requires a minimum of two lines (unless otherwise agreed): one as a spring to position vessel alongside pier and a second for retaining close contact between pier and head of vessel. The vessel should be laid as close as possible alongside the berth and whenever possible the main engines should be in neutral.
- The practice of ‘steaming against a single short spring’ without a gangway may put passengers and crew at risk and leaves the master open to accusations of failing in his duty of care in event of an accident; the owners or operators of the vessel or of the pier may also be liable. The vessel should be properly moored alongside the pier.
- Masters and operators should ensure that vessels are moored appropriately for prevailing weather and tidal conditions.
- When out of service and moored alongside for longer periods, the vessel should use (a minimum of) two ‘springs’, one leading forward and the other aft, plus two ropes, each from the head and stern of the vessel.
- Mooring lines should be inspected frequently for any signs of wear and replaced as necessary.
- Bollards and cleats (on both the vessel and the pier) must be suitable for purpose and used only in the manner for which they were designed. They should be regularly inspected for any signs of wear and replaced as necessary.
Best Practice

Safety is the prime consideration while embarking and disembarking passengers, which is best addressed through recognising and mitigating risks.

Clear management of the process and an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all vessel crews and pier staff concerned are essential. Vessel crews and pier staff have equal responsibility for safety and this section provides guidance and information on best practice for both communities. The following basic precautions should be taken:

- Shut and latch pier gates before the vessel leaves the pier
- Vessels berthing should place the embarkation/disembarkation point right opposite the pier gate
- Ideally a gangway should be placed between the pier and the vessel
- The vessel operator (or owner) should have a clear policy to cover situations when passengers board from or depart to unmanned piers
- The master’s responsibility for passenger safety ends when the passenger lands safely onto the pier

Staff on Piers

Most piers are not staffed but there are six piers which do have staff in order to aid operators in passenger handling and management. These piers are Tower, Westminster, Embankment, Waterloo, Greenwich and North Greenwich. The piers are staffed as follows:

- **Pier Controllers**: staff employed by pier owners with responsibility for overseeing the safety and smooth operation of the whole of the pier and for ensuring that vessels moor as closely as practicable to the allocated positions; they work closely with the Brow Persons.
- **Brow Persons**: staff employed by individual vessel operators to assist with the safe operation of Vessel Operator (or owner) vessels as they arrive/depart, to provide guidance and assistance to passengers and to help manage passenger flow.

The second key consideration with regard to pier and jetty management is to ensure safe movement of passengers on and off each vessel so that arrivals and departures of vessels and people are undertaken without undue delay.

On occasions, vessels may occupy pier space for an extended period for stores, etc or have a pre-booked pier space for a function, known as ‘static lay-up’. Vessels must adhere to pier booking times, particularly during busy periods and waiting vessels should hold station without blocking or compromising vessel movements on and off the pier or the movement of passing traffic, particularly in the main channel.
There is no blanket ban on vessels overtaking in Central London, but there are many more risks involved than when overtaking in open, less crowded waters. **Overtaking must only take place if the Fairway is clear.**

The Col Regs and PLA Byelaws are very clear about the responsibilities between vessels but slower vessels never have the right to impede the passage of other faster traffic. Passing agreements should only be made under exceptional circumstances and in all cases masters must ensure clear identification of the calling and responding vessel.

1. A vessel should not overtake another vessel that is already in the process of overtaking
2. Overtaking should not take place under most bridge arches
3. Overtaking should not take place abreast busy piers with vessels manoeuvring (A good example is Tower Pier particularly when a cruise ship is moored alongside HMS Belfast)
Turning

In general, most traditionally propelled passenger vessels manoeuvre into the tidal stream to berth, whereas more manoeuvrable vessels such as some high speed craft berth in the direction they are going (Stern fetching), regardless of the tidal stream.

Occasionally, two vessels can find themselves approaching the same berth from opposite directions at the same time, requiring good seamanship and timely communication between the vessels to prevent this situation presenting any problem. Note that no single type of operation (e.g. River Bus or River Tours) has any priority over another. Masters must learn to appreciate the nature of other operations and, where conflict arises, a passing agreement on VHF is usually the most appropriate solution.

At peak times during the high season a passenger vessel often has to wait for a berth on a pier to become vacant. Vessels waiting for a free berth should endeavour to avoid the Authorised Channel and not impede the passage of other passenger vessels proceeding to their allocated berth.

Masters are reminded that waiting vessels are ‘underway’ and the Col Regs apply.

See diagrams on page 41 and 42 for preferred navigation in the Upper Pool and at Westminster.
Wash and Draw-off

Central London is increasingly busy with fast commuter and passenger vessels, cruise ships, tugs and tows, leisure craft, emergency services and port service vessels. This activity inevitably causes varying degrees of wash, day and night. Many factors affect wash from an individual vessel including depth of water, tide height, hull design, type of foreshore and wall, speed, whether accelerating or decelerating, and the propulsion system.

When underway, masters of vessels should always be mindful of the wash being created, particularly at low water. It may be necessary to reduce speed well below the speed limit and if possible, increase the distance passing off sensitive areas, which should be included in a vessel’s generic passage plan. When the PLA deals with wash issues it attempts to find solutions that do not unduly impede river trade whilst ensuring that damage is prevented to appropriately engineered structures and correctly moored vessels. The responsibility for preventing wash lies with the master of the vessel. However a vessel moored or berthed on the tidal Thames should ensure that adequate protection is provided and that the vessel is appropriately moored.

Outside central London, very small recreational vessels such as rowing boats, canoes and stand-up paddle boards have minimal free board and masters should bear in mind the dramatic and sometimes dangerous effect that wash can have on them.

Wash and Draw Off
Permanent Notice to Mariners – Number 5

In particular:
“Mariners are reminded of the requirement to navigate their vessels at all times at a speed commensurate with local circumstances and conditions; and that an 8 knot speed limit applies in certain parts of the River Thames. Specifically, upstream of Wandsworth Bridge and in adjoining creeks, areas around Canvey Island; and a 12 knot speed limit above Margaretness”

Thames Byelaw 16

Extract from BL16:
“Due care should be taken in the vicinity of vessels moored and working on berths adjacent to the navigational channel

Caution is necessary over the low water period when “draw off” can cause particular problems to berthed vessels.”
General Direction 9 – Stern Marking

It is mandatory that all passenger vessels have correctly marked sterns in accordance with GD9.

All class IV, V, VI and HSC vessels should display an area of high visibility reflective material, which is evenly illuminated at night.

These markings will be inspected by the MCA or PLA as part of the vessel certification process and should conform to the following specification:

- Be between 3.75 and 4.5 m²
- Be in a vertical or near vertical plane as possible
- Face directly astern
- Be evenly illuminated between unset and sunrise
Lookout

Col Reg Rule 5 is arguably the single most important element in the safe operation of any vessel. Its importance cannot be overstated, especially on a river as busy as the Thames and more especially through central London.

Rule 5 is short but it has two vital elements:

- You must pay attention to everything – not just looking ahead out of the bridge windows but looking all around the vessel, using all your senses and all personnel and equipment available to you. There must always be someone looking-out. If the weather or the situation around you causes concern, then more lookouts may be needed and you must call them without hesitation.

- You must use all of that information continuously to assess the situation your vessel is in and the risk of collision.

Central London is particularly busy with other passenger and commuter vessels but outside this area there are many more leisure vessels. Some of these such as canoes, paddle boards and rowing boats are particularly small and hard to see making a good lookout all the more vital.

Col Regs - Rule 5

“Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper lookout by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision”
Col Regs - Rule 5
“Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper lookout by sight and hearing …”

PLA General Directions No. 4
“…an effective, continuous listening watch maintained on VHF…”

London Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) - 24hr service
VHF Channel 14
Teddington to Crayfordness
VHF Channel 68
Crayfordness to Sea Reach
Telephone
020 8855 0315

PLA Notices to Mariners (NTMs) are available at

Communications

London VTS

Navigation in the Port of London is always busy and local restrictions change constantly. The PLA issues Notices to Mariners (see panel) to keep river users abreast of events and changing conditions.

London VTS will warn of short notice changes and reinforce Notices to Mariners by the routine half hourly navigation broadcast on VHF (Channel 14) at 15 and 45 minutes past the hour upstream of Crayfordness. Examples of information passed on the navigation broadcast are tide heights, bridge arch closures, sporting events and temporary requests to proceed at slow speed.

The local VHF VTS channel (see panel) is used primarily for vessel traffic management but is also used as a local calling frequency and for making “passing agreements” to mitigate the risk of close quarter situations. VHF channel 14 in particular is very busy, so transmissions must be short and not used for long inter-ship conversations or inappropriate comment.

It is vital that the masters listen closely to VHF at all times,

Passenger vessels must ensure that the noise from the engines, discos, commentaries etc do not interfere with the VHF radio traffic in the wheelhouse.

London VTS staff are available 24 hours a day for advice or information via VHF or telephone and river users are encouraged to visit the Barrier or Port Control Centre facilities.
Local traffic control

At certain times on the river there will be a need to manage traffic in order to create space and keep all river users safe. The following scenarios are where you might expect to see local traffic control in place:

- River closures
- Events
- Arrival and departure of a large ship
- During the handling of an incident

Local traffic control will be carried out by an attending Harbour Service Launch displaying blue flashing lights. VHF channel 14 will be used by the Launch who will have a call sign prefixed by “Thames Control”

As a master you are to ensure you follow all instructions as given by the local traffic control vessel and remain well clear when advised to do so.
Although everything will be managed and risk assessed to try and prevent incidents and accidents, they may still happen.

The **operator** should aid the master in controlling the immediate incident and passengers and then assist the relevant authorities in reporting and investigating incidents.

Once an incident has been investigated and concluded the **operator** should take every step to ensure that recommendations are carried out and that any internal findings are managed so as to prevent a re-occurrence of the incident.

**Contacting emergency services**

**Emergency call procedure**

The best ways to summon help in an emergency while afloat are listed here – in order of preference:

- **London VTS**
  on VHF Channel 14
- **London Coastguard**
  on VHF Channel 16
- **London Coastguard**
  call 999 / 112

The duty officers at London VTS and London Coastguard are stationed next to each other and are trained to coordinate the appropriate response (RNLI, Ambulance, Police, Fire).

Procedures for Man Overboard (pages 77–78) and Medical Emergencies (this page) are the exception.

Appendix A on page 85 outlines procedures for making Mayday and Pan Pan calls. A reminder of the Phonetic Alphabet can be found in Appendix B on page 84.

**Medical Emergencies**

If you have a medical emergency on board, in the first instance you should call:

- **London Coastguard**
  on 999 / 112

The Coastguard will arrange for an ambulance to meet you at the nearest pier. This is the fastest way to get medical assistance to a patient.

London VTS/London Coastguard should still be informed of any emergency action you are taking.

If meeting an ambulance at a pier is not feasible then you should call London VTS/Coastguard who may send a lifeboat to assist.

If a lifeboat is tasked, it will itself have to meet an ambulance at a pre-arranged pier so this course of action usually causes a delay in the patient getting medical assistance.
Security Guidance

**Reporting of suspect packages or suspect activity**

Operation Boatman and Project Griffin are key reactive plans produced by the Metropolitan Police Marine Policing Unit in consultation with the passenger vessel industry and the Port of London Authority. They are aimed at providing a pre-planned response should a threat materialise to public safety and/or navigation.

It is stressed that Operation ‘Boatman’ and Project ‘Griffin’ are limited to the Metropolitan Police area of jurisdiction. Vessel and pier operators on the Thames but outside this area (e.g. Gravesend) will need to engage with the relevant local Police Authority at their home mooring.

Masters and operators should also be familiar with the TRANSEC Guidance document “Maritime Security Guidance, Tidal River Thames Passenger Services (Vessels & Piers)”

This Code does not go into specific details but it is the responsibility of vessel and pier operators to be aware of and stay up-to-date with these initiatives and to brief their staff accordingly.

**For guidance**

MPU Duty Officer, Phone: 07774 141299

The Marine Policing Unit at Wapping will provide guidance on reporting suspect packages through Operation Boatman and suspect activity through Project Griffin. Also visit:

[www.met.police.uk/projectgriffin/what_is_project_griffin.html](http://www.met.police.uk/projectgriffin/what_is_project_griffin.html)

**In an emergency**

Contact the MPU via London VTS on channel 14 or call 999 / 112 and ask for police.

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**Police or Fire Brigade Assistance**

Police or Fire Brigade assistance, either on scene or at an arranged berth/wharf, should ideally be sought via:

- **London VTS** on VHF Channel 14
- **London Coastguard** on VHF Channel 16

Otherwise dial 999 / 112 and ask for Police / Fire Brigade as appropriate.

The Marine Policing Unit (MPU) at Wapping also maintains a continuous listening watch on VHF Channel 14.

On board emergency plans should clearly show how to obtain Police and Fire Brigade assistance in your area of operation.

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Man Overboard

Each operator will have its own procedure (set out in the Emergency Procedures Manual within the SMS) for recovering a Man Overboard but this page serves as a general check list of actions to be done in the event of a Man Overboard either while underway, alongside a pier or if a person is discovered to be missing on arrival at a pier.

In all cases the navigation authority and vessel operator (or owner) management must be informed as soon as possible after the immediate incident has been dealt with.

Man OverBoard (MOB)

Immediate response to a Man Overboard is critical if the casualty is to be recovered alive, but care must be taken not to neglect the safety of the passengers remaining on board.

In most circumstances, many of the emergency response procedures for MOB while underway will also apply to MOB/Missing Person at a pier.

- Make every attempt to mark the last known position of the person (MOB) with a life buoy, light or flare
- Press the AIS Lifebuoy icon twice and the VHF DSC Button
- Post additional lookouts to maintain visual contact with MOB – this is vital
- Reduce speed and manoeuvre vessel initially to keep screws away from the MOB and then to recover MOB and provide lee (tidal and wind conditions dependant)
- If a person is lost while passengers are transferring to or from the vessel it is quite possible that other passengers nearby may jump in to attempt rescue and so put themselves into danger. Passenger embarkation and disembarkation need firm control to prevent such misguided heroics
- If at a pier, additional assistance can be sought from the land-based emergency services
During a MOB incident

- Stop music or entertainment
- Sound General Alarm
- **Initiate MAYDAY or PAN PAN call as appropriate** (page 85) on VHF channel 14
- If at a pier also call 999 / 112 for Emergency Services assistance
- Provide as much detail as possible including:
  - Time of discovery of MOB
  - Number of MOB
  - Weather conditions
  - Direction of Flow
  - Any likely points where MOB might be found (e.g. bridges, locks, moorings, weirs etc)
- If appropriate, deploy some crew ashore to undertake initial search
- Alert other vessels or persons ashore and seek assistance
- Sound horn regularly to advise vessel whereabouts
- Delegate MOB procedures to all crew and personnel, i.e. launch of LSAS, lookout, deployment of grab net or MOB ladder, manning of search light and other aids as required
- Crowd control
  - Keep in constant communications with passengers and ensure other passengers do not take risks or are put at risk
  - Stop passengers congregating on one side of the vessel which may cause list, hindering vessel manoeuvrability and rescue efforts
  - Ensure entrances/exits are kept clear and keep rescue zone clear for retrieval
  - Have blanket and other First Aid equipment available and prepared for the rescue zone
  - Stand by to assist emergency services

After a MOB incident

- Report the incident to the relevant authorities (page 81) and where appropriate ensure statements, witness names and addresses are taken and photos taken if necessary
- Ensure that any life-saving or First Aid equipment is replaced/restocked
Crew and Passenger violence

Early Prevention

Vessel operators should attempt to anticipate problem situations by evaluating parties and groups at the time of booking; parties of all ages and sizes have potential to cause trouble and it is wrong to prejudge any particular age group or community. Potential antisocial situations can often be recognised during the initial booking procedure and appropriate judgements made then. Operators should consider early liaison with local police for advice about the viability of the event and measures to prevent crime and disorder.

Events that have previously proved problematic are under-21 events, internet ticketed events and some urban music events. If you have enquiries for any of these events, consideration should be given to carrying out a full assessment.

The Metropolitan Police Promotion/Events Risk Assessment Form 696 is ideal for this and should be submitted prior to any such event.

Adopting robust assessment processes will assist in identifying appropriate measures to reduce risks, which may then be embodied in booking conditions and include such measures as limiting party size, bar restrictions etc.

All operators should be aware of their responsibilities under the Private Security Act 2001 in relation to the vetting of passengers by staff and security procedures www.the-sia.org.uk/home

In particular, it must be recognised that a person performing a security function (i.e. vetting and/or searching) must be trained and registered under the act.

If the assessment highlights a need for licensed door supervisors, consideration should be given to employing dedicated staff.

Operators should recognise the risks of overburdening their own staff with security and other roles.

There are several approaches that may be taken with unruly or aggressive passengers and each situation must be quickly assessed and acted upon. This section is designed to help masters and crews make the best judgment and mitigating action dependent on circumstances. In some instance police assistance may be necessary.

Possible Scenarios

The following list is not exhaustive but illustrates some situations:

- Individual aggrieved by some aspect of the trip and is making a considerable disturbance
- An individual has boarded perhaps under the influence of alcohol or drugs and is behaving aggressively or in an anti-social manner
- A large party has consumed excessive amounts of alcohol and is disrupting other passengers or worse, started fighting
Immediate Course of Action
Mindful of the above, always try to recognise a potential situation developing and take action before it deteriorates. Thereafter:

- Assess risk and/or danger
- Try to calm the situation – talk quietly
- Try to understand the reason for the behaviour
- Request peer passenger or organiser to assist
- Call for emergency services if necessary
- Attempt to clear passenger(s) from the vessel and pier

Secondary Course of Action

- Are crew and staff involved in the incident?
- Advise Vessel Operator (or owner) management
- Complete an Accident/Incident Report Form
- Prepare to make a statement to the Police

Dealing with the Media

Companies should set out ways to deal with possible media interest in an incident; it is recommended that a single company spokesperson is appointed to handle questions. Operators should have specific responses laid out (in their Crisis Management Document) and train their staff to deal with the media according to those pre-planned responses.

Staff, customers and suppliers should be informed before the story appears and any statements issued should be as positive as possible and appropriate.

In the event of a major incident or event, especially when casualties are expected, the media will rapidly approach the vessel for comments and pictures. It is recognised that this is a daunting and stressful experience for the crew who are not media-trained. Nevertheless they should be briefed to give a holding response rather than a “no comment” response. An example of a holding response could be:

- “An incident [fire, bridge strike, collision etc] has happened on the vessel [Vessel name], at [location and time]. Emergency services have been called/are currently on the scene”
- “It is not known at this stage if anyone is injured and the rescue operation is underway”
- “The media are urged to contact the emergency services or the vessel operator / owner for more details”

On no account should any member of the crew give names and numbers of possible fatalities, injured or missing persons. Also, do not speculate on the reason for the accident/incident, as that is part of the investigation.
Reporting obligations
The Harbourmaster is obliged under the Port’s SMS to investigate all (navigational) incidents and in certain cases to report such incidents to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch and/or the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. 
*MGN 289 details the MAIB incident reporting process and can be searched for on the MCA website*

In the event of being involved in a navigational incident, either directly or indirectly as a witness, it is most important that all the facts are recorded for any subsequent enquiry. Failure to report an incident is not only an offence against PLA Byelaw No 7 but causes considerable additional work, insurance difficulties and embarrassment for both the operator and master.

### Incident Reporting

Depending on the severity of the incident, the number and range of organisations that can be involved in an investigation is surprising, as shown below. This lists the priority order in which they might be contacted:

- **London VTS on VHF channel 14.**
  VTS in conjunction with London Coastguard, will coordinate the appropriate emergency services (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Lifeboat)

- **The PLA – for all incidents on the tidal Thames**
  Details of any incident will automatically be passed onto the PLA by London VTS

- **The Vessel Operator**

- **The MCA – for all incidents (except to PLA licensed vessels) particularly where a vessel is damaged.**

- **The MAIB – for serious incidents (fatalities and serious injuries) that occur while afloat.**

- **The HSE – for all incidents that occur on piers and jetties.**

- **Pier owners**

- **The vessel insurers**

The master should immediately report an incident to London VTS and then make a follow-up written report on a PLA incident reporting form to the relevant Harbourmaster. It is very much in the master’s own interest to report his view of what happened as soon as possible; the authorities investigating the incident should then obtain a balanced view from all parties of what happened.

A specific step-by-step checklist to handling and reporting an incident should be included in the operators Emergency Procedure Manual (part of the SMS). The DPA should be able to provide details.
Port of London Authority (PLA)  
– via London VTS

VHF: Channel 14 – Teddington to Crayfordness
VHF: Channels 68 & 69 – Crayfordness to Seaward Limit
Phone: 020 8855 0315

The Harbourmaster should be informed of all incidents on the tidal Thames and the on-going internal investigations, as well as being provided with an incident report form and any other evidence which will assist in establishing the cause of the incident.

If unsure, report to the PLA and the MCA

Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)

Email: mo_orpington_admin@mcga.gov.uk
Phone: 01689 890400

The local MCA office should be informed of any incident (except to vessels licensed by the PLA) and in particular any damage to a vessel, so that they can if necessary inspect the vessel and make any recommendations to return the vessel to work.

If unsure, report to the MCA and the PLA

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

www.hse.gov.uk

If you are an employer:
You must report any work-related deaths, and certain work-related injuries, cases of disease, and near misses involving your employees wherever they are working.

If you are in control of premises (piers and jetties):
You must report any work-related deaths, certain injuries to members of the public and self-employed people on your premises, and dangerous occurrences (some near miss incidents) that occur on your premises.

If unsure, report to the HSE and the MAIB

Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB)

Phone: 023 8023 2527

This is the MAIB’s dedicated accident reporting line and is monitored 24 hours a day.

Alternatively visit:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-accident-investigation-branch

Accidents, including serious injuries and fatalities, should be reported to the MAIB by the quickest means possible. This is so that the MAIB can decide whether to investigate the accident without delay, and prevents evidence of all types being lost or decaying.

After this initial notification you can expect to be asked to complete the Accident Report Form (ARF).

If unsure, report to the MAIB and the HSE
Emergency Situations

The master will have been trained in making MAYDAY and PAN PAN emergency calls as part of the BML. Making such a call should not be taken lightly and ideally it is the master’s decision whether to do so and which call to make. However if the master (or other suitably trained crew member) is incapacitated then another crew member may have to make the call. Below is a brief synopsis of the type of emergency that should trigger such a call and by what method.

Generally such emergency calls should be made on VHF channel 14. If there is no response use channel 16.

MAYDAY

A MAYDAY situation is when a vessel or person is in “grave and imminent danger” and requires immediate assistance, for example: fire, explosion, sinking, or Man Overboard.

MAYDAY obliges potential rescuers (including emergency services and other craft in the area) to drop all other activities and immediately attempt a rescue.

Thames AIS has a facility to activate a MAYDAY using the lifebelt icon on the toolbar; this then transmits a GPS signal highlighting an emergency on board. It should only be used to supplement the main MAYDAY VHF transmission.

PAN PAN

PAN PAN indicates an urgent situation of a lower order than a “grave and imminent threat requiring immediate assistance”, such as a mechanical breakdown, loss of rudder and control, or a medical problem, but where life is not in peril.

PAN-PAN informs potential rescuers (including emergency services and other craft in the area) that a safety problem exists whereas ‘MAYDAY’ obliges them to drop all other activities and immediately attempt a rescue.

On hearing a PAN PAN call, other vessels should listen and establish whether they are able to assist, if not remain silent and keep listening.

It may be a fine line between a MAYDAY and a PAN PAN call – if in doubt make the MAYDAY call
Example of a typical MAYDAY emergency broadcast:

“MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY”
“This is [Vessel Name, Vessel Name, Vessel Name]”
“Position [XX XX north, XX XX west]
or [opposite this pier/that landmark]”
“My vessel is on [fire/sinking/has suffered an explosion]” or [I have a Man Overboard]”
“I require immediate assistance”
“We have [XXX] people on board”
“OVER”

Wait five seconds then repeat if no reply heard.

Example of a typical PAN PAN emergency broadcast:

“PAN PAN, PAN PAN, PAN PAN”
“This is [Vessel Name, Vessel Name, Vessel Name]”
“Position [XX XX north, XX XX west]
or [opposite this pier/that landmark]”
“My vessel has [lost power and is drifting] or [I have a Man Over Board]”
“We have [XXX] people on board”
“OVER”

Wait five seconds then repeat if no reply heard.

The Phonetic Alphabet

A – Alpha
B – Bravo
C – Charlie
D – Delta
E – Echo
F – Foxtrot
G – Golf
H – Hotel
I – India
J – Juliet
K – Kilo
L – Lima
M – Mike
N – November
O – Oscar
P – Papa
Q – Quebec
R – Romeo
S – Sierra
T – Tango
U – Uniform
V – Victor
W – Whisky
X – X-ray
Y – Yankee
Z – Zulu
### Glossary

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>AIS</td>
<td>Auto-Identification System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF</td>
<td>Accident Report Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>ByeLaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM</td>
<td>British Marine (Formally PBA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BML</td>
<td>Boat Master Licence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoC</td>
<td>Certificate of Compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col Regs</td>
<td>International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSHH</td>
<td>Control of Substances Hazardous to Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPA</td>
<td>Designated Person Ashore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSC</td>
<td>Digital Selective Calling (on VHF radio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSCM</td>
<td>Domestic Safety Management Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD</td>
<td>General Direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HML</td>
<td>Harbourmaster Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMU</td>
<td>Harbourmaster Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>High Speed Craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>Health and Safety Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMO</td>
<td>International Maritime Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMSPBCC</td>
<td>Inland Waters Small Passenger Boat Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOSH</td>
<td>Institute of Occupational Safety and Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISM</td>
<td>International Safety Management Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFB</td>
<td>London Fire Brigade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LKE</td>
<td>Local Knowledge Endorsement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPV</td>
<td>Large Passenger Vessel (&gt;250 pax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPHA</td>
<td>London Port Health Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRS</td>
<td>London River Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSAS</td>
<td>Life Saving Apparatus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAIB</td>
<td>Marine Accident Investigation Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARPOL</td>
<td>Maritime Pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Maritime and Coastguard Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGN</td>
<td>Marine Guidance Notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOB</td>
<td>Man Overboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPU</td>
<td>Marine Policing Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSN</td>
<td>Merchant Shipping Notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NtM</td>
<td>Notice to Mariners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRA</td>
<td>Navigational Risk Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofcom</td>
<td>Office of Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Public/Passenger Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pax</td>
<td>Passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>Port of London Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNtM</td>
<td>Permanent Notice to Mariners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POB</td>
<td>Persons On Board (part of the AIS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Port Passage Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVOpsC</td>
<td>Passenger Vessel Operations Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIB</td>
<td>Rigid Inflatable Boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNLI</td>
<td>Royal National Lifeboat Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RYA</td>
<td>Royal Yachting Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>Rowing Code Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAR</td>
<td>Search and Rescue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCV</td>
<td>Small Commercial Vessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Safety Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLAS</td>
<td>International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBCZ</td>
<td>Thames Barrier Control Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TfL</td>
<td>Transport for London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRRC</td>
<td>Thames Regional Rowing Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VHF</td>
<td>Very High Frequency (radio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTS</td>
<td>Vessel Traffic Services</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
We hope that you have found this Code useful and informative. If you have any further questions regarding the Passenger Vessel Operations Code or have any queries or suggestions regarding anything in this document, please contact the PLA. The weblinks used in this document were correct at time of publication but they are, by their nature, prone to change. Please report dead links via the PLA website.