

X. SMALL CRAFT

A. BACKGROUND: In a continuing effort to minimize the risk of marine casualties, the Committee has developed Standards of Care (safe operating practices) for the LA/LB port area and seaward approaches outside the breakwater, including the Transit Shipping Sea (TSS) Lanes. Operators of pleasure vessels, commercial fishing vessels and sportfishing boats are encouraged to follow these standards in order to safely operate their craft in and around the port.

Pleasure vessels, commercial fishing vessels, sportfishing boats, 1,100' supertankers and fast containerships, tugs with barges in tow, high speed ferries, and other commercial vessels share the LA/LB waters and seaward approaches. Besides operating in a congested environment, these vessels frequently encounter large wakes and fog, conditions that increase the risk of serious marine accidents. Only experienced, well trained, and prudent mariners should operate vessels in these difficult waters. Pleasure vessel, commercial fishing vessel and sportfishing boat operators should be aware of the fact that large vessels cannot stop or alter course quickly and, therefore, cannot easily avoid a collision with smaller, more maneuverable vessels. Crews of larger vessels also have trouble seeing smaller vessels because containers carried on deck often cause blind spots that may extend more than 1/2 mile ahead.

The Committee supports sustained local efforts to educate pleasure boaters, commercial fishermen and sportfishermen of the potential hazards to both themselves and other vessels when operating in the POLA/POLB area, in the port approaches, and near large commercial vessels. Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary and Power Squadron units are available to communicate with and explain these Standards of Care to pleasure vessel, commercial fishing vessel, and sportfishing boat owners/operators. These local initiatives are aimed at minimizing navigational conflicts between small crafts and larger commercial vessels. For the purpose of this document, pleasure vessels, commercial fishing vessels and sportfishing boats are designated as small crafts.

B. STANDARDS OF CARE FOR PLEASURE VESSELS COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSELS AND SPORTFISHING BOATS OPERATING IN THE LA/LB PORT AREA

1. Ensure your vessel is safe: Before getting underway, you should ensure that all required safety equipment is on board and is operational/serviceable, i.e. personal flotation devices (life jackets), throwable flotation devices, flares, fog horns, fire extinguishers, etc. You should also verify that vessels batteries are fully charged, and running lights are operational. "Added safety" means a fully operational VHF radio, together with sound engine and hull.

2. Ensure your vessel is seaworthy: Prevailing conditions in the POLA/POLB area include heavy seas caused by offshore storms and large wakes developed by high speed ferries, crew/supply boats, heavy displacement tugs, and large vessels. Do not operate vessels designed primarily for protected waters in and around the port area. This bad practice has led and will continue to lead to severe casualties.

3. Keep flares and distress calling equipment handy: Being disabled in an area used by large commercial vessels can be extremely hazardous. You should be able to quickly locate and use flares and the VHF radio, seek immediate help or notify other vessels.

4. Be extra careful in fog: If your vessel is not equipped with a radar, avoid the risk of getting underway in reduced visibility as defined in Chapter XVIII. Since fog conditions often develop quickly and unexpectedly, you are encouraged to carry and use radar reflectors, which will help large commercial vessels and VTS to see your vessel on their radars and avert collisions. Ensure a safe transit home by using accurate positioning equipment, such as a GPS receiver, and a VHF radio to monitor vessel traffic. The practice of loitering in the harbor entrances is especially dangerous in restricted visibility and should be avoided at all times.

5. Observe Rule 9 of the Rules of the Road: This rule states that small vessels shall not impede the passage of a vessel which can navigate safely only within a narrow channel or fairway. Again, for the purpose of this document, pleasure vessels, commercial fishing vessels and sportfishing boats are considered small crafts.

6. Avoid passing larger vessels close aboard: Do not cross in front of or pass larger vessels close aboard. Large containerships can travel at speeds over 28 knots, but appear slower due to their size. Additionally, do not pass close to the stern of large vessels as their prop wash and suction create considerable turbulence.

7. Pass tugs with caution: Tug boats often tow barges behind or alongside, and have severely limited maneuverability. Often you may not be able to see a barge in tow because it can be one (1) mile or farther astern of the tug. More often than not you may not be able to see submerged tow wires, which pose a serious hazard if you pass between the tug and its tow. Such encounters have caused serious damage and injury to boaters. .

8. Know the locations of Transit Shipping Sea (TSS) lanes and Regulated Navigational Areas (RNA): Pleasure boaters, commercial fishing vessels and sportfishermen should know where large commercial vessels regularly operate and avoid these areas, especially at night or in fog. If you must operate in these areas, pay particular attention to nearby large vessels and maneuver clear of their tracks. Loitering, fishing or anchoring in the harbor entrances dangerously

restricts the movement of vessels inbound and outbound from these large port complexes.

9. Know how and when to monitor VHF Channels 16, 14, and 13: VHF Channel 16 is the emergency hailing and broadcast frequency, Channel 13 is for larger vessel bridge-to-bridge communications, and Channel 14 is the VTS working frequency. When operating near large commercial vessels, and at night and/or in fog, monitor these radio channels to stay alert for large commercial vessel movements and important mariner safety notices. Be prepared to respond if a commercial vessel calls to alert another mariner that a dangerous situation is developing.

10. Always know your vessel's position: It is recommended that all pleasure vessels, commercial fishing vessels and sportfishing boats be equipped with a GPS receiver (many are hand-held and low cost). You cannot be aware of and avoid the TSS lanes if you do not know your position. Giving your accurate position when in fog or distress, will allow emergency help to find you easier and faster.

11. Be an informed mariner: It is a good marine practice to know the Rules of the Road and to stay current with the safety tips and articles provided by local maritime magazines and Coast Guard Notices to Mariners. Notices to Mariners provide information on port construction projects (dredging, breakwater expansion, shallow water habitat construction, etc.), AtoN changes, bridge closures, and other physical conditions affecting marine safety. You should also monitor NOAA maritime weather broadcasts (VHF Channel 1) and Coast Guard BNTM (VHF Channel 16). They will keep you informed about heavy seas, high winds, fog, or AtoN changes that can threaten a safe voyage. You are also encouraged to log onto the local Coast Guard's homepage, <http://www.cglalb.com> for the most current safety information.

12. Man overboard procedures: Pleasure vessels, commercial fishing vessels and sportfishing boats in addition to their own crewmembers often carry visitors, paying customers and fishing enthusiasts. It is vitally important to the safety of everyone aboard that vessel owners/operators train their crew in rescue procedures in the event of anyone falling overboard, and in the proper use of the VHF radio and emergency flares. Vessel operators; should also consider the appointment of a proven mariner, to assume command in the event of his incapacitation.

Appendix K has additional information on vessel safety in LA/LB Harbor.

(*) RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee strongly recommends that owners/operators of pleasure vessels, commercial fishing vessels and sportfishing boats avail themselves of the numerous educational courses being offered by the Coast Guard, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadron and the California Department of Boating and Waterways. It is highly recommended that individuals who rent pleasure boats show proof of having taken and passed one of these courses. The rental agency in addition, should have renters demonstrate knowledge of the Rules of the Road, basic safety procedures and regulations about operating a vessel under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs.