

# **Procedure**

## **VHF Communication**

### **VTS and HCC**



**Port of Rotterdam Authority**  
**Harbour Master's Division**

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## Introduction

The Harbour Master of Rotterdam, also State Harbour Master for the Rotterdam-Rijnmond region and VTS authority, considers that it is of great importance that shipping is familiar with (VHF) communication procedures. In order that such general information, including the applicable regulations, applicable procedures and definitions, is available to all in a well-organised way, he announces the following:

This procedure is divided into two chapters:

- Procedure VHF communication Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), chapter 1;
- Procedure VHF communication Harbour Coordination Center (HCC), chapter 8.

# 1. PROCEDURE VHF COMMUNICATION VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES (VTS)

## Provisions for all vessels

### 2. Area of Operation

The area of operation of the 'Procedure VHF Communication VTS' is the area indicated on the map in Appendix 2. The VTS sectors and the areas covered by the two VTS centres are also indicated on this map.

### 3. Vessel Traffic Services

The services in the area of operation include the following:

- Information Services (<sup>1</sup>INS)
- Traffic Organisation Services (<sup>2</sup>TOS);
- Navigation Assistance Services (<sup>3</sup>NAS).

#### 3.1 **Information Services (INS)**

Information services provide essential and up-to-date information to support on-board navigational decision-making processes. This includes information about the position, identity and destination of other vessels, as well as hydrographical and meteorological information.

#### 3.2 **Traffic Organisation Services (TOS)**

The objective of Traffic Organisation Services is to contribute to the safety and effectiveness of shipping and to identify and manage potentially dangerous traffic situations. These services provide essential, up-to-date and timely information to support on-board navigational decision-making processes and involve giving timely information, advice and instructions.

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<sup>1</sup> Information Service (INS),

<sup>2</sup> Traffic Organisation Service (TOS)

<sup>3</sup> Navigational Assistance Service (NAS)

are VTS services that comply with the IMO Resolution A 857(20) and the IALA Recommendations and Guidelines.

### **3.3 Navigation Assistance Services (NAS)**

Navigation Assistance Services can be provided to supplement information services and traffic organisation services. These can be given at the request of shipping traffic or when this is deemed necessary by the VTS authority.

Such services offer essential, timely and up-to-date data to support on-board navigational decision-making processes and involve giving information, advice and/or instructions.

This refers to highly-intensive traffic information which is particularly important in the event of:

- emergencies;
- faults and/or deficiencies on board vessels;
- anomalous navigation or meteorological conditions.

Navigation Assistance Services can only be given:

#### At sea

In the Rotterdam approach area, as referred to and defined in Article 2, sub-paragraph d, and Appendix 1 of the Territorial Sea Shipping Regulation, consisting of a description of traffic in the area and warnings regarding the risk of collision or grounding.

#### In the inner area

- the Nieuwe Waterweg (New Waterway);
- the Calandkanaal;
- the Beerkanaal;
- het Yangtzekanaal;
- the Nieuwe Maas to the boundary of the VTS area (kilometre marker 993.0);
- the Oude Maas to the boundary of the VTS area (kilometre marker 999.5).

## **4. Traffic instructions**

Traffic instructions, issued in accordance with legal regulations, are binding orders imposed on shipping traffic by the VTS authority and are described in law in the following way.

Traffic instruction; a command given by an authorised person to one or more vessels in the shipping traffic to effect a certain result in traffic behaviour or an imposed prohibition of a certain result in traffic behaviour.

## **5. Communication**

In the VTS sectors Maas Approach, Pilot Maas and Maasmond (Maas Entrance) from the port piers towards the sea, the primary official language is English and the secondary is Dutch.

In all other VTS sectors/areas, the primary official language is Dutch and the secondary is English. In the event of communication problems between ship and shore stations, as well as between ship stations, in addition to the primary languages of Dutch and English, German may also be used.

Within the Rotterdam port area, where the waterway is not covered by a VTS sector, shipping must maintain a listening watch on VHF Channel 10.

## 5.1 Radio discipline

The VTS-VHF channels may not be used for any other communication than that which concerns safe navigation or traffic flow. Mutual agreements concerning navigation can be made directly or via the VTS operator on the VTS-VHF channel. Strict radio discipline should be maintained at all times, and the VTS operator may issue instructions where necessary.

Some international basic principles include:

- If the VTS operator ends his message with 'OVER', a response is desired from the vessel.
- If the VTS operator ends his message with 'OUT', no response is desired from the vessel.

## 5.2 Use of message markers

In order to improve the radio discipline and prevent overload of the VHF channels in the VTS sectors, the VTS can use the internationally adopted 'message markers' in the communication with shipping. This is in order to keep the communication short, to the point and clear for all waterway users.

Application

After a call, the information is preceded by one of the eight indicators below to stress the intention of the message. These indicators can be used by all shipping in the message traffic on the VHF-VHF channels.

This concerns the following eight message markers:

- Information (message contains observed facts)
- Question (message has a questioning character)
- Answer (message is the answer to the previous question)
- Intention (message concerns intended navigational action)
- Warning (message is a warning about dangers)
- Request (action is requested of addressee)
- Advice (intention of sender is to influence the addressee by means of a recommendation)
- Instruction (intention of sender is to influence the addressee by means of a traffic instruction)

## 5.3 Shipping announcement

The VTS operator can issue a shipping announcement in the communication with the shipping. This shipping announcement can be a good additional means of reaching a large group of shipping traffic in a particular area and/or sector. The use of a shipping announcement can restrict communication to individual shipping traffic.

The VTS operator can use the shipping announcement in the event of exceptional circumstances in a particular sector such as work being carried out, visibility messages, blocking and incidents, etc.

## 5.4 Reporting and listening watch obligations

Sea-going vessels, inland waterway vessels and pleasure craft (only pleasure craft equipped with VHF) should:

- maintain a listening watch on the appropriate VHF channel while passing through the VTS area;
- participate in local communications traffic, if necessary;
- use only the appropriate VHF channel to report any intention to perform special manoeuvres, such as crossing the waterway, entering or leaving the harbour and any other action that deviates from the usual traffic pattern, including incidents;
- report incidents on VHF Channel 11 within Rotterdam, where the waterway is not covered by a VTS sector
- provide any information requested by the VTS authority.

All vessels wishing to pass beneath a bridge or through a lock must submit requests for the operation of these structures or questions about the sequence of passage to the bridge master or lock-keeper via the designated VHF Channels, as described in Appendix 1: 'Communication Channels'.

If such activities require that the listening watch on the VTS- VHF channel be interrupted, the shipping traffic in question should report this to the VTS operator in the appropriate sector. Any such interruptions should be as brief as possible.

## 6. Responsibility

Nothing in this procedure relieves shipping traffic of its responsibility for safe navigation. Information is not intended, and may not be used, to cause vessels to ignore existing regulations or measures that are vital to the interests of good seamanship.

Information obtained from or distributed by the VTS authority must be used by shipping traffic to optimise safe navigation. Shipping traffic should provide any information requested by the VTS authority.

## 7. Additional provisions for shipping

### 7.1 Mandatory reporting on arrival in the VTS area

All sea-going vessels are obliged to report on arrival in the VTS area. Depending on the direction of approach, this will be:

- from sea on VHF Channel 1 (sector Maas Approach);
- via Oude Maas on VHF Channel 62 (sector Oude Maas);
- via Nieuwe Maas on VHF Channel 81 (sector Maasbruggen).

Such reports should include the following details:

- name of the vessel;
- call sign;
- position;
- destination;
- draught;
- special circumstances.

All vessels in possession of an 'Exemption from Pilotage Requirements' or an 'Exemption Certificate' should also report:

- that the circumstances on board are in agreement with the rules and restrictions imposed when the exemption certificate was issued;
- the name of the certificate or exemption holder, certificate number.

## **7.2 Mandatory reporting in the VTS area**

All sea-going vessels passing through the VTS area should report on the appropriate VTS-VHF channel. Such reports should include the following details:

- name of the vessel;
- destination;
- special circumstances.

### When:

- on leaving a VTS area;
- on commencing unmooring;
- if a special manoeuvre is being performed, such as:
  - crossing the waterway;
  - entering or leaving a harbour;
  - attempting to overtake another vessel;
  - passing another vessel, if this requires special attention;
  - any other action that deviates from the usual traffic pattern.

## **7.3 Mandatory reporting for preparation for departure or shifting of sea-going vessels - VHF 11**

All sea-going vessels should report with the following details, depending on their position, to the VTS Center Rotterdam, prior to preparing the actual departure/shifting:

- name of the vessel;
- draught;
- destination;
- special circumstances.

All vessels in possession of an 'Exemption from Pilotage Requirements' or an 'Exemption Certificate' should also report:

- that the circumstances on board are in agreement with the rules and restrictions imposed when the exemption certificate was issued;
- the name of the certificate or exemption holder, certificate number.

## **8. PROCEDURE VHF COMMUNICATION HARBOUR COORDINATION CENTER (HCC)**

### Provisions for all vessels

#### **9. Area of Operation**

The area of operation of the 'VHF Communication Procedure HCC' is the area indicated on the map in Appendix 2.

#### **10. Harbour Coordination Center, VHF 11 (for traffic issues)**

The captain on board the sea-going vessel or the pilot, on behalf of the vessel's captain, should report to the Harbour Coordination Center, if:

- the shipping agent has not notified the Harbour Master of the vessel's departure;
- pilotage, (extra) tugs and/or boatmen are required;
- the intended voyage cannot continue, stating reasons.

All vessels should report:

- in the event of incidents;
- to request assistance from the emergency services.

#### **11. Harbour Coordination Center, VHF 14 (for operational issues)**

All vessels should report to the Harbour Coordination Center to obtain permission/exemption for executing activities. Such reports should include the following details:

- name of the vessel;
- berth; and
- any special circumstances and the nature of the activities, such as diving work, work involving sheer-legs, bunkering activities, etc.

Also all questions/reports for the Inspectorate of Transportation, Environment and Safety regarding hazardous substances should be passed to the Harbour Coordination Center.

#### **12. Additional provisions for all vessels when starting/ending activities and/or exercises - VHF 11**

After obtaining permission/exemption from the Harbour Coordination Center, VHF 14 (see point 11), any activities and/or exercises which have an immediate effect on shipping traffic should, upon commencement, be reported to the VTS Center Rotterdam on VHF 11, with the following details:

- name of the vessel;
- berth;
- any special circumstances, for example activities and/or exercises (such as lowering sloops, diving work, work involving sheerlegs, etc.).

### **13. Harbour Coordination Center, VHF 19 (shipping announcements - alternative channel)**

The following shipping announcements will be broadcast by the Harbour Coordination Center:

- when wind speeds of 8 Beaufort or more are expected, weather forecasts will be issued 10 minutes before each full hour.

All marine shipping and other shipping is advised to maintain a listening watch on VHF 19 when berthed.

### **14. Registration Center IVS 90 - VHF 14**

All inland vessels that are required to register with IVS-90 (according to the *Regeling Communicatie Rijksbinnenwateren* (Communication Regulation for State Inland Waterways)) should report when leaving a berth in the Rotterdam nautical control area via one of the following IVS-90 posts:

- Harbour Coordination Center, VHF 14

This report should include details stated in the *Regeling Communicatie Rijksbinnenwateren* (such as vessel and voyage data, cargo details and number of passengers and crew).

### **15. Automatic Identification System (AIS)**

The purpose of AIS is to prevent collisions and identify vessels, and thus AIS plays an important role in traffic safety. However, this is only possible if the AIS transponder is functioning correctly and is transmitting the correct data. The (State) Harbour Master expects that visiting vessels fitted with an AIS transponder, whether mandatory or not, ensure that this AIS transponder is functioning correctly and is furnished with and transmits the correct data, in accordance with prevailing legislation.

### **16. Commencement date**

This procedure VHF communication comes into effect on 1 January 2020 and can be cited as "Procedure VHF Communication VTS and HCC". This procedure replaces the 'VHF Communication Procedure VTS and HCC' of January 2017.

## Appendix 1. Communication channels

<b>VTS Services:</b>			
	Maas Approach sector	VHF Channel	1
	Pilot Maas sector	VHF Channel	2
	Maasmond (Maas Entrance) sector	VHF Channel	3
	Maasvlakte sector (not yet operational)	VHF Channel	5
	Europoort sector	VHF Channel	66
	Rozenburg sector	VHF Channel	65
	Maassluis sector	VHF Channel	80
	Botlek sector	VHF Channel	61
	Oude Maas sector	VHF Channel	62
	Eemhaven sector	VHF Channel	63
	Waalhaven sector	VHF Channel	60
	Maasbruggen sector	VHF Channel	81
	VTS Center Rotterdam	VHF Channel	11
	Within Rotterdam, where the waterway is not covered by a VTS sector	VHF Channel	10
	Harbour Coordination Center, for traffic issues	VHF Channel	11
	Harbour Coordination Center, for operational issues	VHF Channel	14
	Harbour Coordination Center, shipping announcements - alternative channel	VHF Channel	19
	Patrol vessels Rotterdam Port Authority (RPA + number), via the above-stated VTS-VHF channels or	VHF Channel	11 14
	<b>Bridges and locks:</b>		
	Calandbrug	VHF Channel	22
	Rozenburgse sluis	VHF Channel	22
	Hartelsluis	VHF Channel	22
	Botlekbrug	VHF Channel	18
	Spijkenisserbrug	VHF Channel	18
	Erasmusbrug	VHF Channel	20
	Koninginnebrug	VHF Channel	20
	Van Brienoordbrug	VHF Channel	20
	Parksluis and bridges across the Delfhavense Schie	VHF Channel	22
	Nieuwe Leuvebrug	VHF Channel	20
	Boerengatbrug	VHF Channel	20
	<b>IVS 90 registration centers:</b>		
	Harbour Coordination Center	VHF Channel	14
	<b>Other VHF Channels</b>		
	On-board communication	VHF Channel	15
	On-board communication	VHF Channel	17
	Ship-to-ship traffic	VHF Channel	77

**Appendix 2: Map of area of operation**

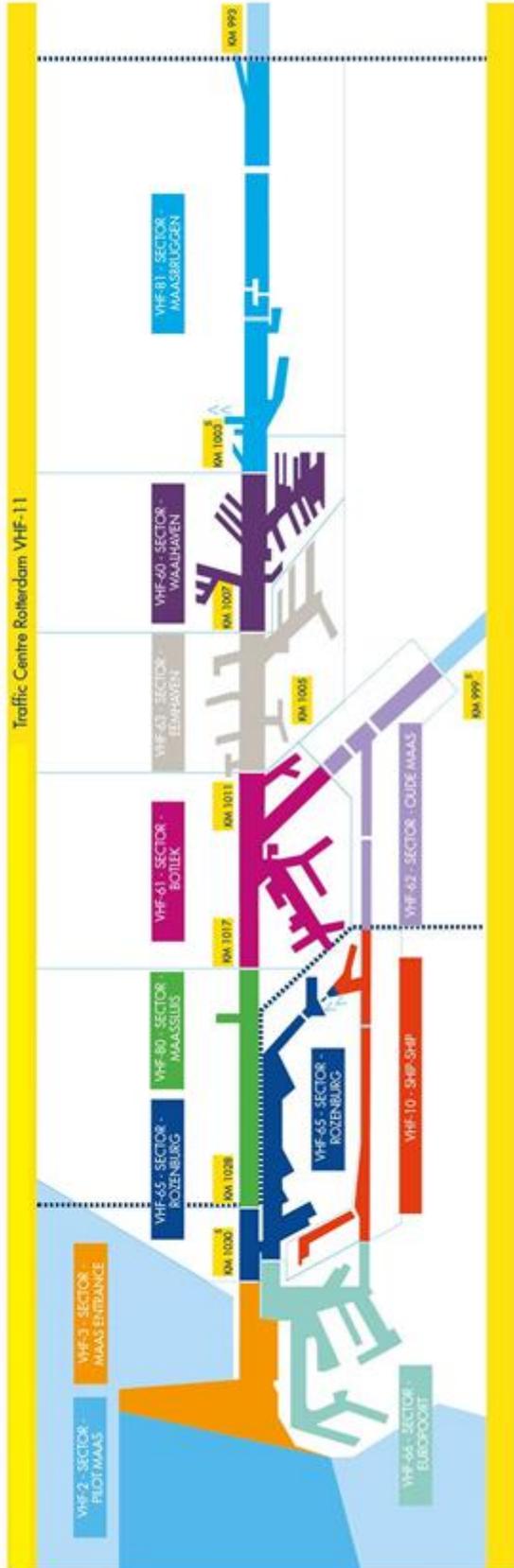
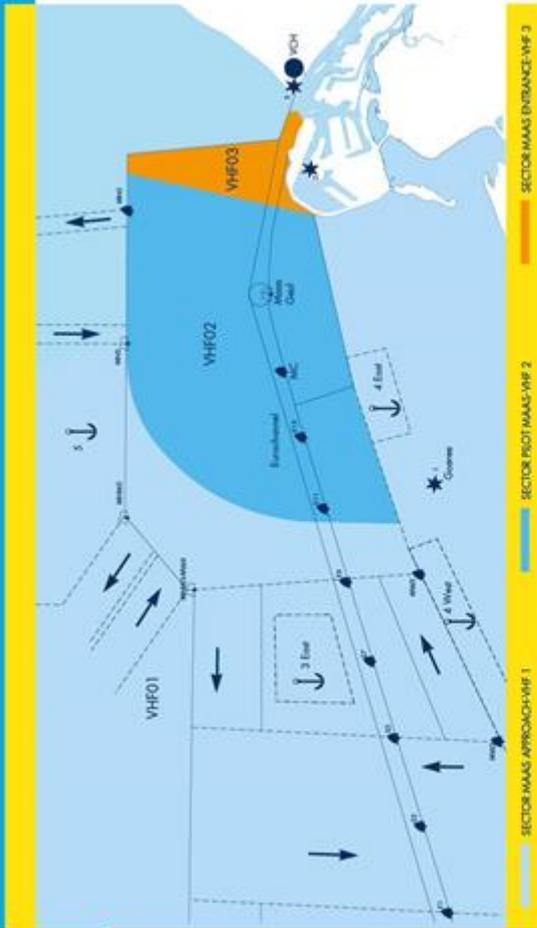
## SAFETY THROUGH COMMUNICATION



### SHIPPING INFORMATION-VTS

#### BASIC RULES

- 1 Responsibility as to safe navigation always remains with the master or skipper on board the vessel.
- 2 A continuous listening watch on the assigned VHF channels should be maintained to be kept well informed about the traffic situation.
- 3 Information should be given on request of the VTS-authority / VTS-operator.
- 4 The VTM provides information, navigational assistance when deemed necessary and possibly traffic instructions on behalf of the Harbourmaster.
- 5 All communication should be brief and relevant.
- 6 Any particulars with regard to navigation or the vessels equipment should be reported.
- 7 The language to be used is primarily Dutch and secondly English with the exception of the sectors Maas Approach (VHF 1), Pilot Maas (VHF 2) and Maas Entrance (VHF 3), where the language to be used is English and secondly Dutch.



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