

# COLRECS

**NORTH**   
SERVICE, STRENGTH, QUALITY



## RULE 6: SAFE SPEED

Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

In determining a safe speed the following factors shall be among those taken into account:

- (a) By all vessels:
- (i) the state of visibility;
  - (ii) the traffic density including concentrations of fishing vessels or any other vessels;
  - (iii) the manoeuvrability of the vessel with special reference to stopping distance and turning ability in the prevailing conditions;
  - (iv) at night the presence of background light such as from shore lights or from back scatter of her own lights;
  - (v) the state of wind, sea and current, and the proximity of navigational hazards;
  - (vi) the draught in relation to the available depth of water.
- (b) Additionally, by vessels with operational radar:
- (i) the characteristics, efficiency and limitations of the radar equipment;
  - (ii) any constraints imposed by the radar range scale in use;
  - (iii) the effect on radar detection of the sea state, weather and other sources of interference;
  - (iv) the possibility that small vessels, ice and other floating objects may not be detected by radar at an adequate range;
  - (v) the number, location and movement of vessels detected by radar;
  - (vi) the more exact assessment of the visibility that may be possible when radar is used to determine the range of vessels or other objects in the vicinity.

### CHECK YOUR SPEED

Rule 6 requires you to **make your own judgement** on the appropriate speed for your vessel, taking into account the situation you are in and the situation you are moving towards. Excessive speed contributes to many collisions.

Rule 5 on look-out and Rule 6 are closely linked. If you do not obey Rule 5, then you cannot obey Rule 6.

Generally a **'safe speed' is a reduced speed**, because:

- In most cases, if either ship reduces speed, their closest point of approach (CPA) will increase. The risk of collision will then reduce.
- It gives you more time to think and to act. Time to think and to act is all important – too much speed and too little time can fatally impair your risk assessment processes.
- It allows you to stop more effectively.
- If a collision does occur, the resulting damage will be a lot less.

Remember:

- You are responsible for proceeding at a safe speed. If an alteration of speed is necessary, then you do not have to ask permission.
- Radar and ARPA are not infallible. They may miss some targets altogether or they may show large targets as weak echoes.
- Navigational aids such as ECDIS and GPS can be equally suspect. Never rely on one instrument or on one technique – always cross-check.
- Constantly monitor your speed – the situation at sea is always changing and a safe speed in one situation can be too fast in another. Situations can change suddenly.
- Maintaining a high speed for commercial reasons is **no excuse and no defence** for proceeding at an unsafe speed.

### SUMMARY

**Always travel at a safe speed.**