

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION
4 ALBERT EMBANKMENT
LONDON SE1 7SR

Telephone: 020 7735 7611
Fax: 020 7587 3210



IMO

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IMPLEMENTATION OF SOLAS REGULATION V/9 – HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICES

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-eighth session (12 to 21 May 2004), in response to a proposal from the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) for the issue of an MSC circular, approved the note set out in the annex. The note indicates the responsibilities of the Contracting Governments to SOLAS for the provision of hydrographic services under the new regulations of chapter V, which came into force on 1 July 2002. A 23 adopted resolution A.958(23) – Provision of hydrographic services which invites Coastal States that want to develop or improve their hydrographic capabilities to seek the assistance and support of the IHO and also invites States that are not IHO members to consider becoming members of the IHO.

2 Member Governments are invited to bring the attached annex to the attention of their national authorities responsible for Hydrography, Nautical Cartography and Safety of Navigation, as well as of other appropriate parties.

ANNEX**NOTE FROM IHO TO ALL COASTAL STATES**

After several years of discussion, chapter V of SOLAS was revised and new regulations regarding safety of navigation were adopted by the Maritime Safety Committee of IMO and became effective on the 1st of July 2002. It has to be noted that under regulation V/9 of the revised SOLAS chapter V, Contracting Governments to SOLAS undertake to arrange for the collection and compilation of hydrographic data and the publication, dissemination and keeping up to date of all nautical information necessary for safe navigation. In particular, Contracting Governments undertake to co-operate in carrying out the following nautical and hydrographic services, in the manner most suitable for the purpose of aiding navigation:

- to ensure that hydrographic surveying is carried out, adequate to the requirements of safe navigation;
- to prepare and issue nautical charts, sailing directions, lists of lights, tide tables and other nautical publications, where applicable, satisfying the needs of safe navigation;
- to promulgate notices to mariners in order that nautical charts and publications are kept up to date; and
- to provide data management arrangements to support these services.

Regulation V/9, moreover requires that the Contracting Governments undertake to ensure the greatest possible uniformity in official nautical charts and publications and to co-ordinate their activities to the greatest possible degree in order to ensure that hydrographic and nautical information is made available worldwide, taking into consideration the appropriate resolutions and recommendations adopted by the International Hydrographic Organization.

Regulation V/2, paragraph 2 defines nautical charts and nautical publications. Under this definition it is clear that a nautical chart or publication must be issued officially by, or on the authority of, a Government, authorized Hydrographic Office or other relevant government institution. The appropriate resolutions and recommendations of the International Hydrographic Organization must be taken into consideration, concerning the authority and responsibilities of Coastal States in the provision of charting in accordance with regulation V/9.

It has also to be noted that the United Nations General Assembly in 1998, the International Year of the Oceans, adopted Resolution 53/32 emphasizing the need for Hydrographic Services to carry out hydrographic surveys, nautical charting and maritime safety information dissemination to cover the needs for marine navigation, coastal management, marine environment preservation, exploitation of marine resources, definition of marine boundaries and scientific studies connected to the sea and near-shore zone.

The new regulations of SOLAS chapter V concerning the obligations of the Contracting Governments to provide hydrographic services and the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/32(1998) acknowledge the principles stated in the IHO Convention.

The IHO is an Intergovernmental Organization established in 1921 and according to its Convention brings about:

- the co-ordination of the activities of the national hydrographic services;
- the maximum possible uniformity of nautical charts;
- the effective and reliable methods for carrying out hydrographic surveys; and
- the development of the hydrographic science and of descriptive oceanography.

The Secretariat of the Organization, the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB), is ready to examine the needs of those States who want to develop or improve their hydrographic capabilities so that they will be in a position to fulfil the hydrographic obligations of the new regulations of the revised SOLAS chapter V.

Today, the IHO comprises 74 Member States and it will be for the benefit of your country and for safety at sea if your Government becomes a Member of the IHO. The IHB is ready to give you any information that you may need regarding the IHO. You may contact the IHB at the following address:

International Hydrographic Bureau
4, Quai Antoine 1er
B.P. 445 - MC 98011 MONACO Cedex
Principauté de Monaco
Fax : (377) 93 10 81 40
E-mail : info@ihb.mc
Web site : www.iho.shom.fr
