



Finnish Maritime Administration

CIRCULAR No. 9/25.4.1997

VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES (VTS)

Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) may be established in coastal, port or harbour areas or inland waterway areas to contribute to the safety of vessel traffic. VTS is based on a recommendation adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which is to be included as Regulation 8-2 in Chapter V of the 1974 SOLAS Convention.

The Finnish Maritime Administration has, under sections 14 and 26 of the Water Traffic Act (463/1996), issued a Resolution on Vessel Traffic Services. This resolution of 14 April 1997 comprises provisions on the implementation of the service, on the functions and responsibilities of the VTS Centres and on the participating vessels.

Merchant vessels and state ships shall participate in the Vessel Traffic Service during their passage through the VTS area, unless participation has expressly been made voluntary. Pleasure craft should also endeavour to adhere to the instructions of the VTS Centre. The Vessel Traffic Services are supervised by the Finnish Maritime Administration.

The Finnish Maritime Administration's Resolution on Vessel Traffic Services shall enter into force on 1 May 1997.

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**FINNISH MARITIME
ADMINISTRATION**

REGULATION

**Date: 14.4.1997
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Contents: Vessel Traffic Services
Based on: Vessel Traffic Act (463/1996), sections 14 and 26
Target groups: Vessels, shipowners
Period of validity: 1.5.1997 - until further notice

**FINNISH MARITIME ADMINISTRATION
RESOLUTION ON VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES (VTS)**

Issued in Helsinki on 14 April 1997

The Finnish Maritime Administration has adopted the following resolution under sections 14 and 26 of the Vessel Traffic Act of 20 June 1996 (463/1996):

General Provisions

Section 1

Objectives of Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)

The purpose of Vessel Traffic Services is to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and the protection of the environment from possible adverse effects of maritime traffic.

Section 2

VTS functions

The Vessel Traffic Service comprises an information service, a traffic organization service and a navigational assistance service.

The purpose of the Information Service is to ensure that essential information on other vessels, weather conditions, aids to navigation, fairway conditions and any other factors of relevance to the safe navigation of a ship becomes available.

The purpose of the Traffic Organization Service is to provide for the safe and efficient movement of vessel traffic and to prevent the development of dangerous maritime traffic situations.

The purpose of the Navigational Assistance Service is to assist the on-board navigational decision making. This service is rendered at the request of a vessel or by the VTS when deemed necessary.

Section 3
VTS and the responsibilities of the shipmaster and the pilot

The instructions of the VTS Centre do not relieve the master of his responsibility for the safe navigation of his ship.

VTS operations do not disturb the traditional relationship between master and pilot.

Implementation of VTS

Section 4
Prerequisites

A VTS may be established in a coastal, port or harbour area or inland waterway area, where high traffic density, complex navigation patterns, shoaly waters, narrow channels or any other such factors justify accident prevention and risk management through efficient communication between the maritime authority, the VTS authority (*VTS Centre*) and vessels.

Section 5
Conditions for approval

The Finnish Maritime Administration may, on conditions set on a case-by-case basis, approve as a VTS Authority any organization which has the facilities and resources necessary to perform the task required and which is, if need be, capable of participating in the international exchange of information.

The concession can be revoked, if circumstances require.

Section 6
The VTS Centre

The VTS is operated from a VTS Centre. The VTS Centre may subdivide the VTS area in sectors. Sector boundaries should not be located where they cause inconvenience to vessel traffic. The boundaries shall be indicated in "Tiedonantoja merenkulkijoille" (Notices to Mariners) and the "World VTS Guide".

Section 7
Responsibilities of the VTS Centre

A VTS Centre shall:

- .1 meet the objectives set by the Finnish Maritime Administration and fulfil the conditions set out in its concession;
- .2 keep a continuous listening watch on the designated radio frequencies and provide all published services during the operational hours of the VTS;
- .3 collect data on the fairway situation, the operational status of aids to navigation, data of vessels and their positions and manouvres in the VTS area, and data from vessels' reports and other data of relevance to its efficiency;
- .4 process and evaluate the acquired data and communicate its conclusions to participating vessels;
- .5 at all times, be capable of generating a comprehensive overview of the traffic in its service area combined with all traffic influencing factors. The VTS shall be able to compile

the traffic image, which is the basis for the VTS capability to respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area;

- .6 to store and retain the acquired data for at least 30 days. Data on accidents and other incidents shall be submitted to the authorities investigating such cases;
- .7 establish operating procedures and train for emergency situations;
- .8 provide authorities with information requested.

In addition, the VTS Centre shall:

- .1 harmonize its operations with ship reporting and routing measures, aids to navigation, pilotage and port operations;
- .2 publish full details of the requirements to be met and the procedures to be followed in the VTS area in "Tiedonantoja merenkulkijoille" (Notices to Mariners) and the "World VTS Guide";
- .3 plan its operations so as to make them internationally compatible;
- .4 be able to provide, upon request, assistance to vessels outside Finnish territorial waters.

Section 8 *Communication*

Communication shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of IMO Resolution MSC.43(64); Guidelines and Criteria for Ship Reporting Systems (9 Dec. 1994).

In any VTS message directed to a vessel or vessels it shall be made clear whether the message contains information, advice, warning or an instruction.

Participating vessels

Section 9 *Responsibilities*

Merchant vessels and state ships shall:

- .1 during their passage through the VTS area make use of an organized VTS in accordance with this resolution, unless this has expressly been made voluntary;
- .2 be aware of the requirements to be met and the procedures to be followed in the VTS area;
- .3 prior to entering the VTS area, make all required reports to the VTS Centre, including reporting of deficiencies and any observed dangers to navigation or pollution;
- .4 inform the VTS Centre and other vessels in the vicinity in case of a failure of or a defect in its appropriate communication equipment;
- .5 during its passage through the VTS area, maintain a continuous listening watch on the assigned frequency, adhere to governing rules and regulations and report deviations from the agreed sailing plan.

Pleasure craft should endeavour to adhere to the instructions of the VTS Centre.

Special provisions

Section 10 *Supervision*

It is the responsibility of the Finnish Maritime Administration to oversee the enforcement of this resolution.

Section 11
Penal provisions

Penalties for breaking provisions and regulations issued under the Vessel Traffic Act (463/1996) are provided in section 24 of the Act.

Section 14
Entry into force

This resolution shall enter into force on 1 May 1997.

Helsinki, 14 April 1997

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