

## COLREGs Rule 7

# Risk of Collision



- (a) Every vessel shall use all available means appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions to determine if risk of collision exists. If there is any doubt such risk shall be deemed to exist.
- (b) Proper use shall be made of radar equipment if fitted and operational, including long-range scanning to obtain early warning of risk of collision and radar plotting or equivalent systematic observation of detected objects.
- (c) Assumptions shall not be made on the basis of scanty information, especially scanty radar information.
- (d) In determining if risk of collision exists the following considerations shall be among those taken into account:
  - (i) such risk shall be deemed to exist if the compass bearing of an approaching vessel does not appreciably change;
  - (ii) such risk may sometimes exist even when an appreciable bearing change is evident, particularly when approaching a very large vessel or a tow or when approaching a vessel at close range.

### Risk of Collision

Rule 5 on look-out and Rule 7 are also closely linked. Under Rule 5 you must use all available means to collect information on the situation around you (look-out) and under Rule 7 you must use that information continuously to assess the **risk of collision**.

To assess the risk of collision you must continuously ask yourself:

- Is a collision **possible**, because of the action (or inaction) of any vessel in the vicinity – including our own vessel?
- Is a collision **probable**? If so, the risk of collision is already here and you need to act urgently.

This risk-assessment process is essential if you are to take appropriate action – see Rule 8 action to avoid collision.

Risk-assessment techniques include:

- Look and listen – as with keeping a lookout, you must use all the information and equipment available to determine the risk of collision.
- Use the compass to check the bearing of approaching vessels, and do this regularly. A steady bearing indicates the risk of collision but a risk of collision may exist even with a bearing change, particularly at close range and with large vessels.
- Use radar.
  - With ARPA, use **relative vectors** to determine the risk of collision.
  - Is the target passing ahead or astern or are you going to collide? Remember the primary information you need to answer these questions is relative information.
  - Do not trust ARPA to give you an accurate CPA. Take 0.5 nautical mile off each indication to be safe and, if the CPA is already 0.5 nautical mile, then assume a risk of collision exists.
- Do not just rely on a change of bearing as an indicator of clearance. As a target ship approaches, its change of bearing should accelerate significantly. If the change of bearing does not accelerate then there is a risk of collision.

**Do not relax** – keep monitoring the situation until the target ship is passed and clear.

### Summary

**Always assess the risk of collision.**

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