



BEST PRACTICE NAUTICAL COMMUNICATION 1st Version

DISCLAIMER

The information in this document was drawn up with the highest possible accuracy. However, the Platform Zero Incidents and its participants cannot be held liable in any way for its content. Adopting measures, suggestions, warnings, etc. must therefore always be preceded by weighing up and risk assessment. Spreading this document among third parties is allowed provided that this is done in the original form.

ABOUT THE PLATFORM ZERO INCIDENTS

The Platform Zero Incidents (PZI) is an initiative of the inland shipping industry. As the name suggests, PZI aims at 0 (zero) accidents in the inland shipping industry. PZI wants to achieve this by:

- 🚩 Being a Platform in which near misses and incidents are shared among its members.
- 🚩 Preventing repetition of near misses/incidents by developing best practices and stimulating their use, based on research and analysis of near-miss/incident (trends).
- 🚩 Building lasting relationships with stakeholders.
- 🚩 Raising awareness and responsibility for safety within the industry.
- 🚩 Being the center of expertise in the field of preventing safety and environmental incidents in the inland shipping industry.

This publication helps to achieve PZI's mission and vision. The document has been developed by and for inland navigation.

It can be used for various purposes, such as:

- 🚩 Reference for crew members and fleet managers.
- 🚩 Training of crew members.
- 🚩 Input for safety meetings on board.
- 🚩 Lesson material for educational institutions.
- 🚩 As a basis for procedures and work instructions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Why this document?

Research shows that miscommunication is a common factor in the process that leads to incidents and often in the process after an incident has happened. With this *Best Practice Guidance (BPG)* of Platform Zero Incidents we would like to highlight different means of communication and ways of communication.

1.2. How to use this document?

This document does not replace the current systems or communication documents already available on board.

However, you can use this document as a reference, but certainly also for familiarization and/or training your crew members. In addition, you can use the document during safety meetings with your crew.

It can increase safety awareness on board, thus avoiding the risk of accidents.

If you have any suggestions to further improve this document, please contact Platform Zero Incidents.

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2. VHF

VHF is the most efficient and effective means to communicate with other ships and with authorities.

To ensure a safe operation of VHF, one should take into account the following points of attention:

- ⚠ The position and place of the antennas. When these are behind the wheelhouse, transmission could be interrupted by obstructions like the wheelhouse. Make sure that the antennas are as vertical as possible and that these are preferably sticking out above the roof.
- ⚠ Make sure vhf installations are in good condition.
- ⚠ Availability of manuals in the wheelhouse.
- ⚠ Use of the correct VHF-channels, these are mentioned in the VHF Manual (“Handboek Marifonie”). The latest version can be found on: <http://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020500-nl.html#02>. Also the mandatory block channels are indicated along the banks.
- ⚠ Clear use of language and terminology. Make sure that messages are clear and that the correct terms are used in the language of the country. Be aware, the main language on board might differ from the language of the VHF.
- ⚠ Check if the message came across. For example, by asking for a confirmation of the message. In case there is any doubt, repeat the message.
- ⚠ A lot of VHF-traffic can be distracting. Getting some assistance from another crewmember can be a solution.
- ⚠ Use the VHF timely and definitely in case of doubt, do not wait for the last moment.



Example Icom

3. SOUND SIGNAL

The sound signal is not always used correctly. The use of the sound signal in case of emergency can prevent incidents and is therefore a legal obligation.

Points of attention for the sound signal:

- ⚠ The installation must be working properly, including the lightsignal in the mast.
- ⚠ The different sound signals should be known (see [BPR bijlage 6](#) // RPR Bijlage 6), like the emergency signal:

■ ■ ■ - - - Emergency signal

- ⚠ When a sound signal is given, when possible, simultaneously use the local VHF channel. This way the sound signal is recorded and could be supportive in an incident research.

4. BLEU SIGN

The blue sign is a medium of communication to indicate the way of passing. Points of attention:

- ⚠ Make sure it is in good condition and working properly, including the second flashing light in the mast.
- ⚠ Answer with the blue sign when the opposing side indicates his with a blue sign or when this is agreed upon via the VHF. Also give the oncoming ship the space that it requires.
- ⚠ The showing of the blue sign is not always indicated in the ECDIS. Some ships do not have their second flashing light linked with the ECDIS.
- ⚠ In case of doubt, always ask for confirmation via VHF.



5. ECDIS/AIS-INSTALLATION (TRESKO OR PERISKAL)

The ECDIS/AIS-installation is a system that collects all the necessary information (VHF-channels, ships with or without the blue sign, the speed of the surrounding ships, shipping reports, water levels, etc.) and shows it in a structured way. Points of attention:

- ⚠ Make sure that it is working properly and that basic functions are known.
- ⚠ Manuals are to be available on board.
- ⚠ Keep in mind that some ships are not sending out (correct) information.
- ⚠ Send the correct AIS-information (not moving, sailing on engine, etc.)
- ⚠ Make a travelplan for every trip.
- ⚠ It is advised to link the system with the Internet, so that shipping reports, the latest chart updates, etc. can be directly implemented on the ECDIS-system.
- ⚠ Make sure the charts have the latest updates.
- ⚠ Notify other ships in case their AIS-installation does not send out (correct information).

6. AN EXTRA LOOKOUT

The extra lookout can make sure that the captain has the right information to act appropriately and to communicate with other ships or authorities. The extra lookout is in contact with the captain via VHF, the intercom or sign language. This person can offer assistance during the passing of low bridges, on open waters where there is a lot of activities, during bad visibility, during mooring activities or when maneuvering.

7. OTHER

Other means like flags, navigation lights, cones and bolls. Also these are means that provide other ships with information. Make sure they are in good condition and clearly visible.

CONSULTED SOURCES

Laws, regulations and standards

-  BPR Art. 4 and 6
-  RPR 3.18, 4 and 6.04
-  Manual VHF (Handboek VHF Maritiem)
-  <http://www.ccr-zkr.org/13020500-nl.html#02> (Dutch)