



**Port of
Rotterdam**

Procedure VHF communication VTS and HCC

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Version control

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Foreword

The Harbor Master of Rotterdam, also the State Harbor Master of the Rotterdam-Rijnmond Region and the VTS Authority, considers the general familiarity of shipping with the (VHF) communication rules to be of great importance. In order to make this general information, such as the applicable regulations, applicable procedures and definitions available to everyone in a clear manner, she shall publish the following:

This procedure is divided into two parts, namely:

- Procedure VHF-communication Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)
- Procedure VHF Communication Harbor Coordination Centre (HCC)
 - Appendix 1 VHF-channels
 - Appendix 2 Area of Application

MO Resolution A.1158(32) Guidelines for Shipping Traffic Services states the following:

- Competent authorities for VTS should:
 - Establish a regulatory framework for the establishment and management of VTS in accordance with relevant international conventions and IMO instruments, IALA standards and national legislation.
- Participating ships must:
 - Provide reports or information required by VTS and take into account the information, advice and warnings provided by VTS and comply with the requirements and instructions given to the ship by VTS, unless there are conflicting reasons relating to safety and/or the protection of the marine environment.

Entry into force

This procedure will be published and will enter into force on 1 February 2026.

- Changes 2025 (version 2.0)

In response to the new IMO Resolution A.1158(32) - Guidelines For Vessel Traffic Services, several recommendations and guidelines have been amended. The most major changes concern the following IALA Guidelines:

- G1089 - Provision of a VTS
Updated to implement the change related to the removal of the 'types of service' and clarification of the 'purpose of VTS'.
- G1132 - VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology
Added new section with standardized operational communication.
- G1141 - Operational Procedures For Delivering VTS
Updated to be in line with the new resolution and the changes to the above-mentioned directives.

Within the IALA Guidelines, the services of the HCC fall under the Vessel Traffic Service.

Procedure VHF communication VTS

1. Vessel Traffic Services

A Vessel Traffic Service is a service implemented by governments that provides opportunities to communicate with shipping traffic and to respond to situations that develop in the VTS area. The service increases the safety and efficiency of shipping and contributes to the 'Safety of Life at Sea' and to the protection of the environment.

A VTS is responsible for:

- Providing timely and relevant information on factors that may affect navigation and support the decision-making process on board. This includes information about the position, identity and destination of other ships and hydrological and meteorological information.
- Monitoring and guiding shipping traffic to ensure the safety and effectiveness of ship movements. This provides essential, up-to-date and timely information to support the navigation decision-making process on board. The support consists of providing timely information, advice and instructions.
- Providing timely and relevant information to respond to the development of unsafe situations. Essential, up-to-date and timely information is provided to support the navigation decision-making process on board. The support consists of providing timely information, advice and traffic instructions.

2. Area of application

The area of application of this procedure is the VTS area as indicated on the map in Annex 2.

3. Traffic instruction

A traffic instruction is a given command to achieve a certain result in traffic behavior or an imposed prohibition of a certain result in traffic behavior. A traffic indication is used, for example, in traffic planning (accidents, congestion), in the implementation of admission policy and in the regulation of passage of locks and bridges. A traffic sign focuses on the intended result ("you must").

In principle, the power to give traffic instructions will have to be used with restraint. The whole thing is laid down in the Shipping Traffic Act art.9. and article 1.19 BPR/RPR, which (in summary) states that the skipper is obliged to comply with a traffic instruction.

Before a competent VTS operator proceeds to issue a traffic instruction, the VTS operator will first point out the violation to the waterway user concerned.

If this information does not have the desired result, a traffic indication may follow.

4. Message Markers

Eight message markers are defined in the SMCP. Seven of these are recommended for use by the VTS to emphasize the content of the message or to ensure that the message is properly understood. Message markers precede the message or the corresponding part of the message and clarify and/or emphasize the message. The message markers to be used are: INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION, WARNING, ADVICE, QUESTION, ANSWER or REQUEST. The message marker INTENTION is used by individual ships to indicate their intended action.

However, message markers can also be particularly effective when language difficulties occur between the VTS and the ship. The optimal practice is that when a VTS communicates with ships, it always uses Message Markers.

5. Radio discipline

No communication may be carried out on the VTS sector channels other than safe navigation or traffic management. The VTS operator has a monitoring and, if necessary, coordinating role in having the ships make agreements with each other. The result of the agreement must be translated by the VTS operator, if necessary, to other shipping.

The VTS operator can interrupt direct contact between shipping. If this option is used, the relevant VTS operator will immediately report this to the shipping industry.

Correct use of the VHF in accordance with the VHF Manual and strict conversation discipline are necessary to prevent unnecessary interference and to ensure a smooth handling of VHF traffic. If users of VHF channels do not adhere to the conversation discipline, crosstalk occurs. This crosstalk, also known as noise, disrupts normal messaging and creates noise that does not benefit safety. To avoid crosstalk on the VHF channels, VHF users must adhere to the following rules:

- Maintain conversation discipline regardless of participants' conversation discipline.
- Always use the ship's name and the own name of a traffic control center in a call, no abbreviations or private names.
- Do not have discussions on VHF channels.
- Use message indicators (both in Dutch and English) to make the type of message clear.

6. Working Language

In the Maas Approach, Pilot Maas and Maas Entrance VTS sectors, the working language to be used is primary English and secondary Dutch.

In all other VTS sectors, the working language is primary Dutch and secondary English. In the event of communication problems between VTS and road users, or between road users themselves, the German language can be used in addition to the working languages Dutch and English.

7. Shipping broadcast

When communicating with shipping, the shipping message can be a good addition to quickly reach a large group of road users in a certain area and/or sector. By using a shipping message, communication to individual road users can be limited and this can reduce communication in general.

The shipping report can be used in special circumstances in a sector, such as work, visibility report, obstructions and incidents, and so on. The shipping report can also be used to inform all ships in the sector at once of nautical information regarding, for example, departing shipping, special transports, expected vessel constrained by draught and/or length and so on.

8. Reporting and listening watch obligation

The following applies to every ship, except for a small ship without hazardous substances:

- Listen out during the navigation in the VTS area on the relevant sector channel.
- If necessary, participate in on-site communication.
- Always report any details regarding the navigation or equipment of the ship.
- Report on the relevant sector channel the intention to carry out a special maneuver, such as crossing the waterway, entering or leaving a port and any other action that deviates from the usual traffic pattern, including reporting incidents.

All ships that want to pass a bridge or a lock must apply for the operation of these objects on the relevant VHF channel of a bridge or lock. If this means that the listening must be interrupted, the road user must report this on the sector channel. This interruption should be as short as possible.

9. VHF channel 10 (inter-ship)

Within the Rotterdam port area, where the waterway is not covered by a VTS sector, shipping must listen on VHF channel 10 for ship-to-ship communication.

10. Additional provisions for seagoing vessels on arrival in the VTS area

All seagoing vessels are obliged to report on arrival in the VTS area, depending on the direction of approach this is:

- From the sea, VHF channel 1 (Maas Approach sector).
- Via the Oude Maas, VHF channel 62 (Oude Maas sector).
- Via the Nieuwe Maas, VHF channel 81 (Maasbruggen sector).

This notification includes the ship's name, call sign, draught, position, destination, and any details.

If the road user is in possession of a Pilotage Exemption Certificate (hereinafter: PEC), the road user must also report:

- Name of PEC holder + certificate number.

Procedure VHF communication HCC

11. Traffic Control Rotterdam, VHF channel 11

The VHF channel 11 is used for traffic matters in relation to maritime shipping. The captain or the pilot on behalf of the captain reports to the Harbor Coordination Centre (hereinafter: HCC) as:

- The ship's agent has not notified the Harbor Master of Rotterdam for departure, except for seagoing shipping with a PEC holder on board.
- Intended trip, with a statement of reason, cannot take place.

All shipping reports on VHF channel 11:

- In the event of incidents

12. Harbor Coordination Centre, VHF channel 14

The VHF channel 14 is used for operational matters, activities and obtaining permission/exemption for the execution of work and/or exercises.

All questions/reports regarding hazardous substances intended for the Inspection Department must also be addressed to the HCC.

13. Harbor Coordination Centre, VHF channel 19

The following shipping report is broadcast by the HCC on VHF channel 19:

With an expected wind force of 8 Beaufort or more, a weather forecast will be transmitted 10 minutes before every full hour, e.g. 00:50 hours, 01:50 hours and so on.

14. IVS-next, VHF channel 14

All target group ships that are accomplices in accordance with the Regulation on Communication and Dimensions of National Inland Waterways must report electronically via IVS-Next when departing from a berth within the Rotterdam Nautical Management Area. In the event of a malfunction in IVS-Next, the report is made to the HCC on VHF channel 14.

Annex 1 VHF channels

Aanroepnaam	VHF channel
Maas Approach sector	1
Pilot Maas sector	2
Maas Entrance sector	3
Sector Europoort	66
Sector Rozenburg	65
Sector Maassluis	80
Sector Botlek	61
Sector Oude Maas	62
Sector Eemhaven	63
Sector Waalhaven	60
Sector Maasbruggen	81
Traffic Control Rotterdam (departing seagoing vessels)	11
Harbor Coordination Centre (operational matters + IVS-next)	14
Communication with DHMR patrol vessels possible on VHF channels mentioned above	
Weather warnings (if expected to be 8 Beaufort or more)	19
Inter-ship communicatie	10
Calandbrug	22
Rozenburgsesluis	22
Hartelsluis	22
Botlekbrug + Spijkenisserbrug	18
Erasmusbrug	20
Koninginnebrug	20
Van Brienoordbrug	20
Parksluis + bruggen over Delfshavense Schie	22
Nieuwe Leuvebrug	20
Boerengatbrug	20

Annex 2 Area of application

