

Towards ECDIS Mandatory Carriage

The International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) are co-operating very closely to take appropriate action for the mandatory carriage of ECDIS to increase safety of navigation. The requirement will result in accelerated production of Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs).

It must be noted that the United Nations Assembly in Resolution A/RES/58/240 in November 2003 "Invites IHO and IMO to continue efforts and to jointly adopt measures with a view to encourage greater international co-operation and co-ordination for the transition to Electronic Navigational Charts." This resolution speaks of required action for the adoption of ECDIS with ENCs that will enhance the safety of navigation and the protection of the marine environment. In accordance with Regulations 2 and 19 of Chapter V of SOLAS, ECDIS must be used with up-to-date ENCs produced by IHO Member States Hydrographic Offices (HOs) in order to meet the carriage requirements of nautical charts and publications.

The IMO Sub-Committee on Safety of Navigation (NAV) at its 51st Meeting in June considered recommendations proposed by a Correspondence Group (CG) established at the 50th session of NAV and comprising various Member States and the IHO. NAV 51 decided to propose to the MSC the following three important actions relating to the adoption of mandatory carriage requirements of ECDIS to increase the safety of navigation.

- To include in Regulation 13.8 of the International Code of Safety for High Speed Craft (HSC), 200, as amended, a new paragraph stating that HSC shall be fitted with an ECDIS, as follows:
 - craft constructed on or after (1st July 2008)
 - craft constructed before (1st July 2008) and no later than (1st July 2010).
- ECDIS carriage requirements for other types of ships to be considered by the MSC based also on a Formal Safety Assessment (FSA) that will be conducted on the use of ECDIS on ships other than HSC and Large Passengers Ships, for which an FSA has already been conducted by Norway.
- To invite IHO to develop a comprehensive on-line catalogue of ENCs, RNCs and official paper charts to be carried as back up.

During the NAV meeting it was accepted that production of ENCs, which constitutes the fuel for ECDIS, has been accelerated and will continue to accelerate. The IHO and its Member States will intensify their efforts in order to ensure that good coverage of ENCs is available as and when ECDIS becomes mandatory.

This is a very important issue for Hydrographic Offices, Maritime Safety Administrations, mariners and the maritime industry and I will try to provide, through the pages of Hydro International, details of future developments as they are decided.