

72% Cargo Ships Over 20,000 Gross Tonnage ECDIS Ready



Almost three-quarters of cargo ships over 20,000 gross tonnage (GT) are already compliant with the SOLAS-mandated Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS) deadline of 1 July 2017, according to the latest figures published by the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO).

The UKHO estimates that a further 3,828 cargo ships over 20,000GT are yet to make the transition to using an ENC (Electronic Navigational Chart) service and therefore do not yet meet SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) regulations on ECDIS carriage. The amendment to SOLAS Chapter V regulation 19.2 requires ships engaged on international voyage to be fitted with an ECDIS no later than the first survey on or after a date based on the type of ship and its size in gross tonnage. Only ENCs supplied from official hydrographic offices

can be used in ECDIS to meet SOLAS requirements for nautical charts and to be considered ECDIS ready.

12 months ago, the SOLAS regulations on ECDIS carriage were extended to cover cargo ships over 50,000 GT. Today, 90% of these larger cargo ships are now considered ECDIS ready.

Encouraging ECDIS Adoption

Emphasising the importance of compliance, Thomas Mellor, Chair of the International Hydrographic Organization's ENC Working Group and Head of OEM Technical Support and Digital Standards at the UKHO, said that the latest data indicate that the category of cargo ships over 50,000GT is close to being the first to complete its transition to ECDIS, with a few hundred ships remaining. Progress is also being made among cargo ships over 20,000GT, with almost three-quarters already using an ENC service. He emphasises it is important to be aware of the implications for the several thousand of cargo ships and any others whose ECDIS deadline has passed without having yet adopted ECDIS. For example, if a ship is detained by Australian Port State Control for non-compliance, the only way of lifting that detention is to first become compliant. Whilst ships have until the first survey after their deadline, in some cases this may mean fitting an ECDIS and training crew at considerable cost and delay.

More Than Just Fitting ECDIS

Since the ECDIS mandate was introduced, the UKHO has highlighted the importance of understanding that having an ECDIS fitted does not guarantee compliance or constitute its effective use. In addition to subscribing to an ENC service, the UKHO has also encouraged shipping companies to ensure that they have revised bridge policies and procedures in their ship's Safety Management System to reflect the requirements of safe, effective and compliant ECDIS operation; that ECDIS software is upgraded to comply with the latest IHO ENC Standards; and that its bridge teams are competent and confident in using ECDIS to its full potential.

With the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) taking a zero-tolerance approach to breaches of these regulations, having gone as far as to require compliance with SOLAS under Australian law, this is legislation that cannot be ignored. Between January and May 2017, AMSA have recorded 142 deficiencies under 'safety of navigation', which resulted in 15 vessels being detained. Many of these deficiencies related to ECDIS and with ECDIS-awareness campaigns planned by the Paris and Tokyo MoU for the end of the year, there will be an increasing focus on safety of navigation.

The UKHO has also produced several [blogs and short films](#) to support vessel operators who are required to update their Presentation Library to Ed 4.0 by 31 August 2017.