

August 11, 2009

OP'S ADVISORY TO SHIPPING No. A-14-2009

TO : All Steamship Agents, Owners, and Operators

SUBJECT: REMINDER OF REGULATION REGARDING ACP'S MINIMUM VISIBILITY AND OTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR TRANSIT

The Panama Canal Authority reminds all customers that vessels transiting the Panama Canal must comply with the following minimum visibility requirements for the navigation bridge, as established in the Maritime Regulations for the Operation of the Panama Canal and in OP Notice to Shipping No. N-1-2009, *Vessel Requirements*:

1. For laden vessels, the view of the water surface from any conning position in the navigation bridge shall not be obscured by more than one (1) ship length forward of the bow, under all conditions of draft and trim.
2. For vessels in ballast (not laden), the view of the water surface from any conning position in the navigation bridge shall not be obscured by more than one and one half (1.5) ship lengths forward of the bow, under all conditions of draft and trim.
3. If the visibility from any of the normal conning positions is obscured by cargo gear or other permanent obstructions forward of the beam, the total arc of obstructed visibility from Conning Position 1 shall not exceed 15 degrees.
4. The side hull plating at the vessel's waterline, fore and aft, must be visible from the conning positions on the bridge wings.

Vessels that fail to comply with the ACP's minimum visibility requirements due to cargo, cargo gear, structures, or for any other reason, must inform the ACP of their visibility condition at least 48 hours prior to arrival in order to be properly scheduled and to minimize transit delays.

Vessels over 150 feet LOA are required to report their blind distance (in ship lengths), calculated for tropical fresh water, from conning positions 1, 2, and 3. Vessels 150 feet LOA or less must have a forward visibility that allows navigation ranges and aids to navigation to be visible from all navigation bridge conning positions. Container vessels are still required to provide their "EXCEED ACP VISIBILITY" condition at least 48 hours prior to arrival, in addition their blind distance.

To summarize, the following information must be submitted at least 48 hours prior to arrival:

1. Blind distance¹ in ship lengths at conning positions 1, 2 and 3, calculated for tropical fresh water;

¹ **Note:** The "Blind Distance" is the forward distance from the bow of the vessel to the closest point on the water's surface which can be seen from all conning positions in the navigation bridge. An observer's height of eye of 1.80 meters above the bridge deck must be used to determine this distance, and must be reported in ship lengths. The Blind Distance at conning position #1 is not applicable to vessels with centerline cranes. All vessels arriving for transit must be ready to provide ACP boarding officers their Blind Distance calculated for tropical fresh water at conning positions 1, 2 and 3.

2. Operational status of port and starboard anchors;
3. Operational status of gyro compass;
4. Operational status of radar(s);
5. Operational status of windshield wipers;
6. Operational status of vessel's wheelhouse and bridge wing RPM, RAI, and pitch indicators and whether they are properly illuminated;
7. Operational status of vessel's bridge wing whistle controls and whether they are located within 5 feet of the end of the bridge wings; and
8. Structure(s) on deck that may be obstructing or obscuring forward visibility.

The ACP is preparing a standardized form whereby the requested information shall be submitted; however, in the interim, this information may be sent via e-mail to ETA@pancanal.com. Vessels are required to provide the ACP with the aforementioned information only when they do not comply with ACP's minimum visibility requirements, or for items that are not operational.

Please be advised that vessels arriving for transit without previously submitting the required information will be considered in compliance and will be scheduled accordingly. However, should deficiencies be detected upon arrival, the vessel may be subject to transit delays, as well as additional charges.

The ACP will determine the conditions under which non-compliant vessels may be allowed to transit. Vessels that require additional resources, due to their visibility condition or other deficiencies, will be assessed the corresponding charges.

Full container vessels that fail to meet the ACP's minimum visibility requirements (1.0 ship length if laden or 1.5 ship lengths if in ballast) will continue to be assessed ACP Official Tariffs item number 1060.5100 or 1060.5110, depending on advanced notification of its condition.

For your convenience, a pre-arrival vessel information form has been enclosed.

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Manuel E. Benítez
Executive Vice President of Operations