

Do 16 million Istanbul residents feel more relieved with the new Implementation Directive of the “Turkish Straits Traffic Order Regulation”?

We all know the strategic importance of Istanbul and Çanakkale Straits both for Turkey and the countries with a coast at the Black Sea. The Turkish Straits, which are the main trade routes for the Black Sea countries, are one of the most difficult waterways with their physical characteristics. In addition to its physical structure, meteorological conditions, sharp turns, reverse and strong currents of Istanbul Strait are the fearful dreams of many masters passing through the straits.



In addition to commercial vessels passing through the straits, there are also numerous fishing boats and private vessels that do not comply with intensive local marine traffic and traffic separation scheme both at the Çanakkale and Istanbul Straits.

According to the data issued by the General Directorate of Maritime Trade, a total of 85,102 ships passed through the straits, where 41,103 of them passed through the Istanbul Strait while 43,999 passed through the Çanakkale Strait. 23,565 of the 41,103 vessels passing through the Istanbul Strait and 19,958 of the 43,999 ships passing through the Çanakkale Strait received pilot services.

In 1936, there were 17 ships passing through the Istanbul Strait per day and according to 2018 data, this number was recorded as an average of 114 ships per day.

Aside from the increase in maritime traffic, the size of the ships has increased as a result of the development of technology and the characteristic of the cargoes has changed. The volume of dangerous goods transported by sea increases every year. Considering the types of ships passing through both straits, approximately 20% of the vessels are chemical carriers. The ratio of vessels with a length greater than 200 meters in the total number of ships passing through the straits is around 10% - 15% in both straits.

Let's remember the explosion that occurred in 1979 when the tanker “Independenta”, which painted the Istanbul skies and the Bosphorus in black, collided with another ship. The fire that emerged as the result of the explosion, could be extinguished in 27 days, 43 of the crew members lost their lives, 96% of the sea creatures were killed and property damage occurred on the buildings located at coastline due to the explosion. The extent of the damage caused by the chemicals liberated into the air was not mentioned at that time. Who can guarantee that no such incident will ever occur again?



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TURKP&I

The Republic of Turkey has started to implement a series of measures for increasing navigational, life, property and environmental safety and ensuring regular control at Turkish Straits. "Practice Direction of the Rules Regulating the Turkish Straits Maritime Traffic Scheme" which is one of these measures, has been revised and the new practice direction has entered into force on 01 September 2018.

We would like to share both some of the items that have been modified and those added with new practice direction in this article.

Modified Articles

- ✳ The transit status of vessels passing the Turkish Straits without any commercial stop will not change if their stay will exceed 168 hours due to weather conditions or due to traffic passage planning made by the TBGTH centers. This period was 48 hours before the amendment. In fact, it is appropriate not to keep the ships occupying the anchorage area and to show care to allow the vessels, whose passage is really close, to wait in those areas. Not encouraging the vessels to wait for a long time at the anchorage, will also prevent possible risks that may be encountered while waiting.
- ✳ The passage of LNG vessels through the straits shall only be carried out during the day time and under pilotage assistance. These vessels shall perform their passage escorted by tugboats (s) each of at least 60 tns bollard pull and for a total 150 tons bollard pull and the traffic to be suspended from the opposite direction.
- ✳ Regarding the LPG vessels, those with overall length of 150 m. and more shall perform their Strait passages during the day time, under pilotage assistance and escorted by a tugboat. The overall length limit at former practice direction was 200 m.
- ✳ The former Practice Direction required that 500 GT and larger vessels carrying dangerous goods shall have valid a P&I cover during their transit which has been amended in the new wording as "300 GT and larger" vessels.

İlave edilen maddeler

- ✳ With the conditions that all safety precautions set by the Commission for the passage of containers and passenger vessels having an LOA of 300 m and over are properly taken, there will be no need for an additional Commission to be set and the initial additional safety precautions will be valid for 1 calendar year as from the date

of their first passage. Vessels (except containers and passenger vessels) having LOA of 300 m and all vessels including Container and passenger vessels having an LOA of 400 meters and more shall apply to relevant port authority or to the İstanbul Harbour Masters's office (if both straits will be passed) at least 10 days before their Strait passages. The passage of these vessels will be subject to the authorization of the administration.

- ✳ The ship agents shall now be responsible for the existence of P&I coverage and the determination of the validity of the policy.
- ✳ An additional clause has been added regarding grounding / contact with coastline/shore etc. and other accidents to occur at İstanbul and Çanakkale Straits and anchorage areas specified in the regulation. Former practice direction was granting a time to the master for the repair of such breakdown. In the new practice direction, it is seen that the relevant port authority will provide ex officio salvage services and that the General Directorate of Coastal Safety will carry out all determinations and investigations for salvage, including underwater surveys.
- ✳ Vessels are not allowed to resume navigation before removal of judicial and administrative measures, completion of administrative investigation and payment of environmental damages, salvage expenses or without providing securities for these matters.
- ✳ Vessels navigating in İstanbul Strait were able to meet with the ship's agent before reaching the anchorage area. The following additional clause has been added to prevent this. In that:

Meeting Places with the Agency;

Vessels navigating within the İstanbul Straits may not make agent contacts except in anchorage areas. In cases of necessity, after obtaining permission from the TBGTH Center, agent contacts can be made while proceeding, as near as possible to the outer limit of the traffic separation lane which, on the starboard of the vessel and without endangering the navigational safety; (a) In the South, at the west of the longitude passing through the Atakoy Marina, not exceeding 1 hour. (b) In the North, on the north of the line connecting Hamsi Limani and Fil Burnu, not exceeding 15 minutes.

- ✳ In cases where two ships try to overtake each other, the one performing the evasive action may hit to the bridge legs and create a greater



danger. Article 20 has been added considering these risks. In that: Bridge Legs; (1) At the bridge legs, including local traffic;

- (a) The vessels shall not overtake each other.
- (b) Bridge legs shall not be approached more than 100 meters.

- ✳ Administrative Sanction clause has been added. In that, administrative sanctions shall be applied for those acting in contrary with this Practice Direction
- ✳ In addition, the following sections have been added to the SP1 report form.
 - CLC BUNKER 2001 CERTIFICATE NO / VALIDITY DATE
 - CLC 92 CERTIFICATE NO / VALIDITY DATE
 - SHIPWRECK RECOVERY CERTIFICATE NO / VALIDITY DATE *

Since we are not subject to the “Nairobi Convention”, filling the last section will be optional.

- ✳ An additional Annex 3 form has been added as a checklist for the technical condition of the vessels passing through the straits.

Comments and Suggestions

From an insurance perspective, amendment and additions appear to be in favor in terms of improving the navigational safety. However, we would like to share a few suggestions that will make strait traffic more secure in terms of loss prevention and risk assessment. Perhaps following suggestions may be included in the next revision, who knows;

- ✳ Stopping the North / South traffic passages at peak hours.
- ✳ Showing excessive sensitivity to maintain the distance between two ships in the C zone where ships carrying dangerous cargoes are anchored and in the D zone where vessels declaring that they will be on anchorage for more than 48 hours and that are derelict, abandoned or dormant or seized ships are anchored and checking the vessels performing transit passage and local traffic more carefully in these areas.

- ✳ Particularly in the Istanbul Strait, we observe that local traffic has its own operation in terms of transit passage, traffic separation scheme and follow-up distance rules. By this reason, monitoring and regulating the local traffic by a separate operator; ensuring coordination between the local traffic and VTS when the VTS sight is limited, in case of a strong undertow current and when the area is affected adversely by the wind.

- ✳ In the passage in North-South direction, sight inside the Istanbul Strait can cause distress to the vessels navigating in traffic separation line at points where eye contact cannot be established due to the physical structure (ex: around Kandilli Cape). Therefore, regulating the local traffic, in particular for these points

- ✳ The traffic density between Beşiktaş-Kızkulesi-Eminönü-Karaköy during the morning and evening hours cannot tolerate any carelessness or failure to comply with the rules. Performing trainings for monitoring local traffic and increasing the safety awareness in the region indicated during these hours.

We hope that the new arrangements will lead to safer navigation in the straits.

