

# MASTER'S GUIDE

## Vessel Traffic Services

The provisions on vessel traffic services are laid down in the Vessel Traffic Service Act 623/2005 and in the Government Decree on Vessel Traffic Service 763/2005.

### PARTICIPATION IN VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES

Vessels of 24 metres in length overall or more are obliged to participate in the vessel traffic services.

When navigating in the VTS area, vessels are required to maintain a continuous listening watch on the working channel used in the area. More detailed instructions about the required reports and working channels can be found in the regional VTS guides.

Vessels navigating in the VTS area, which are not obliged to participate in the vessel traffic services, are recommended to maintain a listening watch on the working channel in the VTS area or sector in question.

### OPERATIONAL HOURS AND LOCATION OF VTS CENTRES

In Finland the vessel traffic services (VTS services) are operated by the Finnish Transport Agency.

The sea areas at the Finnish coast are divided into six VTS areas. These are Bothnia VTS, West Coast VTS, Archipelago VTS, Hanko VTS, Helsinki VTS and Kotka VTS. In addition, Saimaa VTS operates in the Lake Saimaa region.

Along the coast VTS services are provided 24 h/day throughout the year. There may be operational interruptions due to technical problems or an unexpected shortage of personnel. Information about the interruptions is given as navigational or local warnings.

Saimaa VTS does not operate off season in the Saimaa Canal. Information about the start and end of the traffic season is given separately.

The traffic image of the VTS area and the related VHF radio communication is saved in the VTS centres. The records are stored for at least 30 days.

## SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE VTS CENTRES

Vessel traffic services include information, navigational assistance and traffic organization.

VTS Areas along the coast provide all three service levels as described below: Saimaa VTS provides the service Information.

Vessel traffic services are provided as required in Finnish, Swedish and English.

Information is given to all vessels whenever necessary, when they report or when a vessel so requests. The information to vessels comprises matters which affect the vessels' safe and smooth navigation. Examples of such information are other vessels in the VTS area, circumstances and the condition of the aids to navigation and channels. The VTS monitors the vessel movements and when necessary informs vessels about any dangers threatening them.

The service Information is provided in all channel sections in VTS Areas.

Navigational assistance can be given to identified vessels on request or when deemed necessary by the VTS centre. Navigational assistance is only advisory and normative; the master of the vessel is still responsible for the manoeuvring of the vessel.

Navigational assistance may include information about the vessel's position and bearings/courses over ground to for example the fairway centre line or the pilot boarding place. Bearings or COG's can also be given so that vessels can pass navigational hazards, for example shoals, at a safe distance. The information provided is based on the data received from the radar or the AIS system used in the VTS centre.

Navigational assistance is provided in the VTS areas along the coast at open sea, from the open sea to the vicinity of pilot boarding places and outer anchorages.

Vessel traffic is organized in order to improve traffic flow and safety.

Traffic organization is provided in the channels in terms of imposing meeting and overtaking prohibitions and if necessary by separating traffic in terms of time and distance. The aim is to prevent dangerous meeting and overtaking situations and congestion.

VTS can separate the vessel traffic in terms of time or distance according to the situation and circumstances, so that vessels are able to meet in a safe area.

In addition there are areas within the VTS areas with permanent meeting and overtaking prohibition.

The services provided in the different VTS areas are described in the regional Master's Guides.

## INCIDENTS

In exceptional situations, such as extraordinary weather conditions, search and rescue situations or any other incidents in which vessel traffic is restricted or put at risk, the VTS centre can temporarily close a channel or fairway section. In exceptional situations the VTS can also issue speed limits or instruct vessels to anchor.

Vessels must immediately report all incidents relating to maritime safety to the VTS centre. Vessels involved in an accident or in imminent danger at sea should first contact the MRCC. In the Lake Saimaa region, vessels should contact the emergency response centre or the VTS centre.

## THE MASTER OF THE VESSEL – RESPONSIBILITY AND OBLIGATION TO REPORT

The vessel's participation in the vessel traffic services does not affect the master's responsibility for manoeuvring the vessel. If the master of the vessel, for a valid reason relating to the vessel's safety, is unable to participate in the vessel traffic services, or to follow the instructions given by the VTS in exceptional situations, he must immediately inform the VTS centre about this.

The master must notify the VTS authority of the following events taking place in the VTS area or its vicinity:

- any incidents or accidents affecting the vessel's safety
- any incidents or accidents endangering the safety of navigation
- any circumstances that may cause pollution of waters or the coast
- any pollutant spills and containers or packages drifting in the sea

## REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO VTS RECORDS

Access to records is priced on commercial grounds as laid down in the Decree of the Ministry of Transport and Communications on chargeable performances at the Finnish Transport Agency (1026/2014). Access to records for use by authorities is free of charge. The conditions for access are laid down in the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999)

## PILOTAGE

If a vessel has been granted a Pilot Exemption Certificate or it has been granted exemption from compulsory pilotage, the master of the vessel shall, upon entry into a VTS area, report the number of the exemption to the VTS centre. This report can also be submitted in advance. An advance notice can be made for several voyages at the same time.

### Compulsory pilotage

Vessels must use a pilot on public fairways which are located in Finnish waters and the part of the Saimaa Canal leased by Finland and which have been defined as fairways requiring pilotage, if pilotage is required by the hazardous or harmful nature of the cargo or the size of the vessel.

The Government Decree on Pilotage gives further provisions regarding the vessels for which pilotage is compulsory.

### Pilotage order

Pilot orders are placed at Finnpilot's Pilot Order Centre.

Pilotage order form: [www.pilotorder.fi](http://www.pilotorder.fi).

# West Coast VTS

## 1 VTS Area

The VTS Area covers the coast along the Sea of Bothnia from Hylkkari light to Vaasa including the merchant shipping lanes, with the exception of the areas administered by the ports.

The boundary line of the West Coast VTS Area runs between the following corner points:

- 1) From Hylkkari light, 60°57.2'N 21°09.5'E
- 2) westward to position 60°57.2'N 20°46.5'E
- 3) to the limit of the territorial sea limit 61°07.6'N 20°46.5'E
- 4) observing the limit of the territorial waters to position 62°36.5'N 20°30.0'E
- 5) 63°21.5'N 20°30.0'E
- 6) Valassaaret lighthouse 63°25.3'N 21°04.1'E
- 7) Ritgrund lighthouse 63°25.5'N 21°30.5'E

The services provided by the VTS centres are described in more detail in the general description of the VTS operations.

## 2 Reporting procedures

The working channel of West Coast VTS is VHF 9.

Reports should include the following information:

- Name of the vessel
- Name of reporting point
- Destination
- Intended route. If an alternative route is selected, this must be reported

Required reports

- upon entry into the VTS Area
- before anchoring
- before leaving an anchorage
- after berthing
- before leaving port
- at the reporting points in the area:
  - Southbound vessels shall report 20 minutes before passing Hylkkari light to Archipelago VTS on VHF channel 71.
  - Northbound vessels shall report 20 minutes before passing Hylkkari light to West Coast VTS on VHF channel 9.

### 3 Areas with meeting and overtaking prohibitions

Meeting and overtaking is permanently prohibited in the following areas covered by West Coast VTS:

- 1) Vaasa: Nygrundin portti– Port of Vaasa between longitudes 021° 18.1' E and 021° 32.1' E in the 9.0 m channel.
- 2) Kaskinen: In the channel section Buoy Rasken– Port of Kaskinen between latitudes 62° 19.3' N and 62° 20.8' N in the 9.0 m channel.
- 3) Kristiinankaupunki: Kristiinankaupunki Lighthouse–Port of Kristiinankaupunki between longitudes 021° 10.2' E and 021° 18.5' E in the 12.0 m channel.
- 4) Rauma: Rauma southern channel between longitudes 21° 15.5' E and 21° 23.8' E in the 10.0 m channel.

These prohibitions do not apply to meeting and overtaking situations in which at least one of the parties is a tug or a vessel, the size of which is comparable to a tug.

### 4 Speed limits

1. The Rauma Valkeakari channel (7.5 m) has an 8 kn (15km/h) speed limit for vessels with a draught of 7 m or more.

### 5 Contact information

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