

17.2.2021

Finnish ice classes and icebreaker escort

The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom assigns a Finnish ice class to each ship calling to a Finnish port. Traficom determines the Finnish ice class based on the classification notation of the ship and it is used to determine the availability of icebreaker escort to Finnish ports and the amount of fairway dues levied.

Icebreakers and Finnish ice classes form the basis of the winter navigation system, the purpose of which is safe and efficient year-round navigation to Finnish ports. To ensure safe and efficient assistance of merchant vessels with icebreakers, certain information is needed before the need for icebreaker assistance arises. Thus, **Traficom cannot confirm Finnish ice class IA Super, IA, IB or IC without the following information, which has to be supplied by the operator:**

- **Maximum and minimum ice class draughts at the aft and fore perpendiculars as well as amidships (upper and lower ice waterline).**
- **Minimum required engine power for the Finnish ice class.**

This information should be available on-board and in any case it is obtainable from the classification society of the ship. Typically, it is given in the classification certificate or an appendix thereof.

In order to be eligible for icebreaker assistance, the ship shall be loaded so that the draught and trim are between the upper and lower ice waterlines. Icebreakers use solely the Finnish ice class register as a source for ice class draughts. Therefore, the information has to be supplied via the ship's agent to the Portnet-system well before the intended voyage so that Traficom can update the ice class register in time before icebreaker assistance. Of course, any other restrictions to the trim and draught of the ship shall be observed, e.g. those arising from the stability information of the ship. Furthermore, note that the Baltic Sea is a winter seasonal area for ships up to 100 m in length, from 1 November to 31 March, meaning that the winter load line applies at this time.

Finnish ice class is determined by the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency for each ship based on the Nationality Certificate, International Tonnage Certificate, International Load Line Certificate, Classification Certificate as well as appendix thereof if needed obtained through the ship's agent in Finland. **The Finnish ice class is valid as long as the certificates on which the ice class is based on are valid or until any changes are effected that affect the ice class**, such as new ice class draughts or engine power requirement. If the above-mentioned changes have been made, without notifying the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency, the vessel is considered to have ice-class II. It is the operator's responsibility to make sure that the Finnish ice class of the vessel is valid before the intended voyage to a Finnish port.

Note also, that **ships of ice class IA Super or IA built before 1 September 2003**, shall comply with the engine power requirements of the current ice class regulation not later than 1 January in the year when twenty years have elapsed since the year the ship was delivered. This means that the new engine power requirement will have to be determined and explicitly communicated to the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency in order for the Finnish ice class to remain valid.

17.2.2021

The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency will assist you in any issues regarding Finnish ice classes. Timely and active communication with the Agency helps ensure that ice-classed merchant ships receive the icebreaker assistance that they are entitled to without undue delay.

For any questions concerning Finnish ice classes, please use iceclass@traficom.fi.
For any questions concerning icebreaker assistance, please use winternavigation@vayla.fi.

Further information concerning assistance restrictions and icebreaker assistance:
<https://vayla.fi/en/transport-network/waterways/winter-navigation> and
<http://baltice.org/>.

Further information concerning Finnish ice classes:
<https://www.traficom.fi/en/transport/maritime/ice-classes-ships>.