U.S. Department of Homeland Security

United States Coast Guard

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United States Coast Guard

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To Distribution

Subj: ELECTRONIC NAVIGATION PUBLICATIONS ONBOARD U.S. VESSELS

Ref: (a) 33 CFR 164.33
(b) 33 CFR 164.72
(c) 33 CFR 161.4
(d) SOLAS V/27

1. Purpose. This policy establishes guidance in regards to the carriage of electronic publications on all U.S. vessels. This policy may be superseded by a future regulatory change.

2. Action. Sector Commanders and OCMIs shall direct their Marine Inspectors and Examiners to use the guidance in this letter when examining required navigation publications on U.S. vessels.

3. Directives Affected. None.

4. Background. References (a) - (c) require U.S. vessels to have on board a currently corrected edition of, or an applicable currently corrected extract from, for each of the following publications: U.S. Coast Guard Light List, Local Notice to Mariners, Tide-current or River-current tables, U.S. Coast Pilot, Light List, VTS Rules, and the referenced regulations. Additionally, ref (d) requires adequate and up to date nautical publications necessary for the intended voyage.

This requires a vessel to have a large amount of printed documents on board and accessible to the mariner. It is standard practice for the industry to have computers on board their vessels and to use them for storage and ready retrieval of any of the above listed general publications.

5. Policy. Pending promulgation of other regulatory guidance, U.S. vessels may maintain the navigation publications listed above in an electronic format that is readily accessible on the vessel by the vessel's crew. As mentioned above, "publications" does not include nautical charts. A backup copy shall be provided in the event the primary electronic format becomes inaccessible. The back-up may be a second computer, CD, portable mass storage device, paper copies, etc. If the back-up copy is in digital format there must be a means of displaying it on board the vessel.

6. Questions. Questions concerning this policy should be directed to Mr. Patrick Lee at patrick.j.lee@uscg.mil or 202-372-1135. This and other domestic vessel policy documents are posted on Homeport at http://homeport.uscg.mil/USvsls.

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This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is not intended to nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party. It represents the Coast Guard's current thinking on this topic and may assist industry, mariners, the general public, and the Coast Guard, as well as other federal and state regulators, in applying statutory and regulatory requirements. You can use an alternative approach for complying with these requirements if the approach satisfies the requirements of the applicable statutes and regulations. If you want to discuss an alternative approach (you are not required to do so), you may contact Mr. Patrick Lee at patrick.j.lee@uscg.mil or 202-372-1135 who is responsible for implementing this guidance.