



COLREGS vs INLAND waters

Written By: Author Unknown

You wonder about it and we see it...the confusion over COLREGS and INLAND waters. In what waters do COLREGS rules apply and in what waters do INLAND rules apply?

Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 80 provides the “lines of demarcation” between the two waters. Inside the lines, the INLAND navigation rules apply, outside the lines, the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) rules apply.

Knowing the difference is very important for determining whether a vessel is in violation of a navigation rule. If violation of an INLAND rule is alleged and the location of the vessel at the time of the violation is in COLREGS waters, the violation typically cannot be processed for civil penalty and may be returned for further review to the processing official. The same applies if a COLREGS rule is allegedly violated and the location of the vessel at the time of the violation is in INLAND waters.

Of course the boarding may occur in INLAND waters but the vessel at the time of violation was operating in COLREGS waters causing the violation of COLREGS rules. If the evidence in the case file fails to describe how the boarding team determined the vessel was previously operating in COLREGS waters, then the violation may appear to be in error. The same applies if the violation is of INLAND rules and the vessel was boarded in COLREGS waters.