

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

4 ALBERT EMBANKMENT
LONDON SE1 7SR
Telephone: 0171-735 7611
Telegrams: INTERMAR-LONDON SE1
Telex: 23588
Telefax: 0171-587 3210



COM/Circ.124
20 February 1995

Ref. T2/6.03

**IMO/IHO GUIDE TO DRAFTING RADIO NAVIGATIONAL WARNINGS FOR
THE WORLD-WIDE NAVIGATIONAL WARNING SERVICE**

- 1 The Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications, at its fortieth session (16 to 20 January 1995), noted an IMO/IHO Guide to Drafting Radio Navigational Warnings for the World-Wide Navigational Warning Service (WWNWS) prepared by the IHO Commission on the Promulgation of Radio Navigational Warnings (CPRNW) and considered that the standardized text, annexed hereto, will be of value to those who draft navigational warnings and to mariners at sea who must understand the warnings they receive.
- 2 The Sub-Committee encouraged the widest possible use of this document and approved it for circulation to Governments.
- 3 Member Governments are invited to bring the annexed IMO/IHO Guide to the attention of mariners and those involved in the promulgation of navigational warnings.
- 4 This circular supersedes COM/Circ.114/Rev.1.

ANNEX

**IHO/IMO
GUIDE TO DRAFTING
RADIO NAVIGATIONAL WARNINGS
FOR THE WORLD-WIDE NAVIGATIONAL
WARNING SERVICE**

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This book provides a practical guide for anyone who is concerned with drafting radio navigational warnings. It is assumed throughout that the warnings are being issued under the auspices of the IHO/IMO World-Wide Navigational Warning Service (WWNWS) and in accordance with the requirements of IMO Resolution A.706(17). The WWNWS includes two major international radio warning services as components; namely, NAVAREA warnings and Coastal warnings.

1.2 It is particularly intended to provide the best form of words for use in all types of navigational warnings in the English language (See Note 1). Note has been taken of the Standard Marine Navigational Vocabulary, where appropriate.

1.3 This document cannot provide specimen texts for every type of event which may occur. However, the principles illustrated herein may be applied in general to drafting messages for every kind of navigational warning and covering all types of hazards.

2 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Radio Navigational Warnings are essentially HAZARD WARNINGS (See Note 2.) As such they are issued in response to SOLAS V/2.b and carry information which may have a direct bearing on the safety of life at sea. It is the fundamental nature of navigation warnings that they will often be based on incomplete or unconfirmed information and mariners will need to take this into account when deciding what reliance to place on the information contained therein.

2.2 IMO Resolution A.706(17) requires the use of the English language for NAVAREA and Coastal Warnings of the WWNWS. It must always be remembered that the majority of mariners receiving radio navigational warnings are only professional users of English who do not speak or read it naturally. Warnings therefore must be written so as to be easily understood by all mariners.

2.3 In order to achieve maximum impact on the mariner it is necessary to present information so that it is CLEAR, UNAMBIGUOUS and BRIEF. This can be ensured by using structured messages which present the text in a standard format with key words to emphasize the most important features of the message.

2.4 The resources employed by administrations and the mariner are extremely limited. Thus only information which is vital to the safe conduct of vessels should be transmitted. Notices to Mariners and other means exist for passing less urgent information to ships after they have reached port. Information of a purely administrative nature should never be broadcast on the regular international navigational warning schedules.

- Notes:
1. See WWNWS Guidance Document, section 5.3 (IHO/IMO Special Publication S 53)
 2. See WWNWS Guidance Document, section 4.2.1.3 (IHO/IMO Special Publication S 53)

3 THE STRUCTURE OF RADIO NAVIGATIONAL WARNINGS

3.1 The minimum information which a mariner requires to avoid danger is:

HAZARD + POSITION

It is usual, however, to include sufficient extra detail to allow some freedom of action in the vicinity of the hazard. This means that the message must give enough extra data for the mariner to be able to **RECOGNIZE** the hazard and **ASSESS** its effect upon his navigation. In some cases it will be desirable to include an estimate of the **DURATION** of the event.

3.2 The text of any radio navigational warning will need to contain some or all of the STANDARD ELEMENTS, as indicated below:

STANDARD ELEMENTS		NAVAREA	COASTAL	LOCAL
Message ID*	Consecutive No.	.	.	
Preamble	1. General Area	.		
	2. Locality	.	.	.
	3. Chart Number	.	.	
Warning	4. Key Subject	.	.	.
	5. Geographical Position	.	.	.
	6. Amplifying Remarks	.	.	.
Postscript	7. Cancellations	.	.	.

* See WWNWS Guidance Document, section 5.1 (IHO/IMO Special Publication S 53)

3.3 The remainder of this book is divided into three sections, which give guidance on the correct way of phrasing each part of the warning to achieve maximum impact with minimum broadcast time, as follows:

- Section A - Preamble
- Section B - Warning (by type of hazard, as described in detail in the WWNWS Guidance Document, section 4.2.1.3)
- Section C - Additional notes on Time and Position

PREAMBLE

A1

IDENTIFIER, GENERAL AREA, LOCALITY, CHART NUMBER

MESSAGE IDENTIFIER	<p>The first words of the text of every warning message must always be MESSAGE SERIES IDENTIFIER followed by the CONSECUTIVE NUMBER e.g. NAVAREA THREE 496; NAVAREA SEVEN 042; NITON RADIO WZ 229; OOSTENDE RADIO NAV WING 767.</p> <p>Note: 1) Message numbers re-start at 001 each year. 2) The Consecutive Number is not the same as the NAVTEX Number B3B4.</p>
GENERAL AREA	<p>The General Area should be sufficient to identify which broad subdivision of a NAVAREA the message affects. For instance 'NORTH SEA' or 'MALACCA STRAIT' would be correct; 'NORTH AMERICA, EAST COAST' is too general. NAVAREA-wide events, e.g. OMEGA or SATNAV warnings, use a NAVAID IDENTIFICATION ACRONYM instead of a General Area (See page B9).</p>
LOCALITY	<p>The Locality should be stated in terms which allow the mariner to identify warnings which affect his passage without having to plot them e.g. 'Thames Estuary' or 'Pinang Approach'. Locality will only need to be stated when it is desirable to refine the General Area.</p>
CHART NUMBER	<p>NAVAREA Warnings normally require reference to an International Chart if one exists. If not, they should preferably reference a chart of the locality (not necessarily the largest scale). The Chart Series should always be quoted, e.g. INT Chart 649, BA Chart 471, etc.</p> <p>Chart numbers are not normally required for Coastal and Local Warnings which are only broadcast in the vicinity of the hazard.</p>

LIGHTS - Casualties

B1

LIGHTHOUSES, BEACONS, LIGHT VESSELS		
Key Subject	Remarks	Comments
MALABRIGO POINT LIGHT, 24-45N 033-56E SANDETTIE LIGHT VESSEL, 51-14N 002-33E	UNLIT	<u>Incorrect Terms</u> include: Out, Extinguished, Not Burning, Not Working.
PHILIP SHOAL BEACON, 18-21.5S 046-37.5W	LIGHT UNRELIABLE	<u>Incorrect Terms</u> include: Weak, Dim, Low Power, Fixed, Flashing Incorrectly, Out of Character.
	DESTROYED	Temporarily Destroyed is <u>incorrect</u> . Note: If temporary buoy established, see WRECKS page for additional phrases.
	FOG SIGNAL INOPERATIVE	Only for major fog signal stations. Generally, fog signal casualties will not need a broadcast.
<p>NOTES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Use CHARTED names, not LISTED names. B. LIGHT LIST number not required. C. POSITION normally quoted to nearest whole minute. D. If the report is unconfirmed, use LIGHT UNRELIABLE. Do NOT use 'REPORTED'. E. Temporary use of a listed reserve light is to be expected. It is not a change of character. F. Damage to DAYMARKS is not usually worth a navigational warning. G. Do not use a navigational warning to request reports on an unwatched light. H. International Chart Abbreviations for light characters are ONLY suitable for NAVTEX, Telex or Morse transmissions. Voice Broadcasts should be drafted using the Table of Equivalents - page B4. This is preferred for NAVTEX, Telex and Morse also. 		

NEW and CHANGED Lights - see page B2 and B3
Light Vessels OFF STATION - see page B5

LIGHTS - New, Moved or Re-established

B3

LIGHTHOUSES, BEACONS, LIGHT VESSELS		
Key Subject	Remarks	Comments
FLAMBOROUGH HEAD LIGHT, FLASH THREE 20 SECONDS 22 METRES 21 MILES	ESTABLISHED 21-14.6N 000-16.3W	New Light.
NARESBORO LIGHT VESSEL, FLASH RED 5 SECONDS 14 MILES	MOVED 0.3 MILES NORTH TO 63-14.8N 022-15.6E	Do not quote former geographical position. Indicate former position by approximate direction and distance.
	RE-ESTABLISHED	For CHARTED or LIST- ED as DESTROYED. See NOTE A.
<p>NOTES: A. RE-ESTABLISHED is only appropriate for lights which have previously been CHARTED or LISTED AS DESTROYED. Navigational Warnings concerning such lights are merely Cancelled when the light is re-established. A new Navigational Warning is only required if the Character or Position is changed. See page B2 or above.</p> <p>B. Quote accurate CHARTED position; in Degrees, Minutes and Decimal Minutes (maximum 2 decimal places).</p> <p>C. Distances should be quoted in miles and decimal miles.</p>		

LIGHTS - GLOSSARY OF DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

B4

CLASS OF LIGHT	Description for NAVAREA broadcasts	Description for Coastal or Local broadcasts
Fixed (steady light)	F	Fixed
Occulting (total duration of light more than dark) Single-occulting Group-occulting Composite group-occulting	Oc Oc(2) Oc(2+3)	Occulting Occulting Two Occulting two plus three
Isophase (equal periods light and dark)	ISO	ISO
Flashing (total duration of light less than dark) Single-flashing Long-flashing Group-flashing Composite group-flashing	FI LFI FI(3) FI(2+1)	Flash Long Flash Flash Three Flash two plus one
Quick (50 to 79-usually either 50 or 60 flashes per minute) Continuous quick Group quick Interrupted quick	Q Q(3) IQ	Quick Flash Quick Flash Three Interrupted Quick Flash
Very Quick (80 to 159-usually either 100 or 120 flashes per minute) Continuous very quick Group very quick Interrupted very quick	VQ VQ(3) IVQ	Very Quick Flash Very Quick Three Interrupted Very Quick Flash
Ultra Quick (160 or more-usually 240 or 300 flashes per minute) Continuous ultra quick Interrupted ultra quick	UQ IUQ	Ultra Quick Flash Interrupted Ultra Quick Flash
Morse Code	Mo(K)	Morse Kilo
Fixed and Flashing	FFI	Fixed and Flashing
Alternating	ALWR	Alternating

LIGHTS - GLOSSARY OF DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

B4

CLASS OF LIGHT	Description for NAVAREA broadcasts	Description for Coastal or Local broadcasts
Fixed (steady light)	F	Fixed
Occulting (total duration of light more than dark) Single-occulting Group-occulting Composite group-occulting	Oc Oc(2) Oc(2+3)	Occulting Occulting Two Occulting two plus three
Isophase (equal periods light and dark)	ISO	ISO
Flashing (total duration of light less than dark) Single-flashing Long-flashing Group-flashing Composite group-flashing	Fl LFl Fl(3) Fl(2+1)	Flash Long Flash Flash Three Flash two plus one
Quick (50 to 79-usually either 50 or 60 flashes per minute) Continuous quick Group quick Interrupted quick	Q Q(3) IQ	Quick Flash Quick Flash Three Interrupted Quick Flash
Very Quick (80 to 159-usually either 100 or 120 flashes per minute) Continuous very quick Group very quick Interrupted very quick	VQ VQ(3) IVQ	Very Quick Flash Very Quick Three Interrupted Very Quick Flash
Ultra Quick (160 or more-usually 240 or 300 flashes per minute) Continuous ultra quick Interrupted ultra quick	UQ IUQ	Ultra Quick Flash Interrupted Ultra Quick Flash
Morse Code	Mo(K)	Morse Kilo
Fixed and Flashing	FFI	Fixed and Flashing
Alternating	ALWR	Alternating

LIGHTS - GLOSSARY OF DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

B4-2

COLOUR	ELEVATION in METRES or FEET, e.g. 14 METRES, 21 FEET		
White Red Green Yellow Orange Blue Violet	PERIOD in SECONDS, e.g. 15 SECONDS (NOT Sec or S)		
RANGE in sea miles		International abbrevia- tions	RANGE for broadcast
Single range	e.g.	15M	15 MILES
2 ranges	e.g.	14/12M	14 AND 12 MILES
3 or more ranges	e.g.	22-18M	22 TO 18 MILES
			<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Shortest Range only will often be sufficient. </div>

BUOYS

B5

BUOYS, LANBYS, SUPERBUOYS		
Key Subject	Remarks	Comments
SANDETTIE NORTH BUOY 51-18N 002-05E CORK LANBY 51-56N 001-29E SMITHS KNOLL LIGHT VESSEL EAST CARDINAL BUOY VERY QUICK FLASH THREE 5 SECONDS ESTABLISHED	UNLIT	<u>Incorrect terms include:</u> Out, Extinguished, Not burning, Light unlit.
	LIGHT UNRELIABLE	<u>Incorrect terms include:</u> Weak, Dim, Low power, Fixed, Out of Character, Irregular, Reduced power.
	DAMAGED	No action for Topmark or Radar Reflectors. Use only for major damage, e.g. loss of superstructure.
	OFF STATION	Buoys not in charted position.
	MISSING	Completely absent from position.
		New buoy. Quote position to 2 decimal minutes if possible.
NOTES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Do <u>not</u> use 'Reported' B. POSITION normally quoted to nearest whole minute. C. UNLIT may be used to amplify 'DAMAGED' as in 'DAMAGED and UNLIT'. D. 'LANBY' (Large Automated Navigational Buoy) or 'SUPERBUOY' may be used in lieu of 'BUOY' where appropriate. E. Do <u>NOT</u> describe the type of buoy, e.g. North Cardinal buoy, Wreck buoy, Port Hand buoy unless the buoy is unnamed. 		

FOG SIGNALS - see page B1

GLOSSARY OF BUOYAGE TERMS

B5-2

IALA BUOYAGE		Comments
PORT) STARBOARD) NORTH) EAST) SOUTH) WEST)	HAND BUOY CARDINAL BUOY	Full Description of light and colour not required for IALA standard buoys. "Lightbuoy" may be used to indicate that the buoy is lit.
ISOLATED DANGER BUOY SAFE WATER BUOY SPECIAL BUOY		
OTHER BUOYS		
<u>COLOURS</u>	<u>PATTERN</u>	<u>SHAPE/TYPE</u>
RED BLACK WHITE GREEN YELLOW	CHEQUERED HORIZONTALLY STRIPED VERTICALLY STRIPED	CAN CONICAL (not OGIVAL or NUN) PILLAR SPAR SPHERICAL WRECK CABLE (not Telegraph) MOORING DANGER ZONE ODAS SINGLE POINT MOORING (not SPM)

BOTTOM FEATURES

B6

WRECKS, REEFS, ROCKS	
Key Subject	Comments
UNCHARTED REEF REPORTED 03-42S 016-21W	Position unconfirmed
DANGEROUS WRECK LOCATED 34-15.2W 014-15.5W	Position confirmed usually by survey
VOLCANIC ACTIVITY REPORTED _____ CAUTION ADVISED	
ARTHUR ISLAND _____ reported to lie about two miles west of charted position.	
NOTES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. These reports may be amplified as follows: "..... marked by south cardinal buoy 0.2 miles southward." B. Position Approximate (PA) is not appropriate since all "reported" hazards will be of this nature by definition. 	

DRIFTING HAZARDS

B7

Key Subject	Comments
<p>SUPERBUOY ADRIFT IN VICINITY _____ AT 231641 UTC</p> <p>HAZARDOUS MINE ADRIFT IN VICINITY _____ AT _____ UTC</p> <p>UNLIT DERELICT TANKER ADRIFT IN VICINITY _____ AT _____ UTC</p>	<p>The time of the position report should ALWAYS be included when known.</p>
<p>NOTES: A. Consideration should be given to cancelling the warning after sufficient time has elapsed for the position to have become degraded.</p> <p>B. Time is to be UTC. See page C1.</p>	

MISCELLANEOUS

88

Key Subject	Comments
<p>CABLE OPERATIONS BY CABLESHIP "NAME" IN VICINITY ____ FROM ____ UTC TO ____ UTC. WIDE BERTH REQUESTED.</p>	<p>Use "requested" when wide berth is for benefit of cablesip.</p>
<p>CABLE OPERATIONS BY CABLESHIP "NAME" OPERATING WITH SUBMERSIBLE AND GUARDSHIP BETWEEN ____ AND ____ FROM ____ UTC TO ____ UTC. CONTACT VHF CHANNEL 12. WIDE BERTH ADVISED.</p>	<p>Use "advised" when operations create a significant hazard.</p>
<p>LARGE UNWIELDY TOW FROM LE HAVRE ____ TO BOSTON ____ WIDE BERTH REQUESTED.</p>	
<p>FIRING EXERCISES FROM ANDOYA RANGE IN AREA BOUNDED BY ____ AND ____ FROM ____ UTC VHF CHANNEL 16 BEFORE TRANSITING AREA. CAUTION ADVISED.</p>	
<p>95 FOOT FISHING VESSEL "NAME" UNREPORTED ON VOYAGE FROM MIAMI TO GIBRALTAR. REPORT SIGHTINGS TO COAST GUARD MIAMI.</p>	
<p>SEISMIC SURVEY BY MV "FOX" TOWING 3000 METRE ARRAY IN AREA BOUNDED BY ____ AND ____ FROM ____ UTC TO ____ UTC. WIDE BERTH REQUESTED.</p>	
<p>VESSEL IN DISTRESS. MV "PLUGLESS" SINKING IN VICINITY ____ ASSISTANCE REQUIRED. REPORTS TO COAST GUARD MIAMI.</p>	<p>Position known.</p>
<p>VESSEL IN DIFFICULTY. MV "GUY FAWKES" ON FIRE. ASSISTANCE REQUIRED. REPORT TO FALMOUTH COAST GUARD OR CROSS JOBURG.</p>	<p>Position Unknown. Reporting point may be "nearest/any Coast Guard station".</p>

ELECTRONIC NAVAIDS

B9

Key Subject	Comments
<p>OMEGA. STATION F ARGENTINA OFF AIR _____ UTC TO _____ UTC. CANCEL THIS MESSAGE _____ UTC.</p>	<p>Cancel 1 hour after time of restoration (if known).</p>
<p>GPS. SATELLITE PRN 13 UNUSABLE _____ UTC to _____ UTC. CANCEL THIS MESSAGE _____ UTC.</p>	<p>Messages concerning long range elec- tronic navaids will not normally need a General Area, Locality or Chart Number.</p>
<p>SATNAV. TRANSIT. SATELLITE 30230-12 UNUSABLE.</p>	<p>Do not use "Until Further Notice" since the fact that the event is complete will always be apparent from the cancellation message.</p>
<p>LORAN. STATION SAINT PAUL ISLAND 9990 MASTER OFF AIR _____ UTC TO _____ UTC. CANCEL THIS MESSAGE _____ UTC.</p>	
<p>DECCA. JAPAN SEA AND EASTERN CHINA SEA. NORTHERN KYUSYU DECCA CHAIN 7C OFF AIR.</p>	
<p>DECCA. NORTHWEST BRITISH CHAIN 3B. RED TRANSMISSION OFF AIR. CANCEL THIS MESSAGE _____ UTC.</p>	<p>Message cancels 1 hour after event completes.</p>
<p>OMEGA. POLAR CAP DISTURBANCE IN PROGRESS. SIGNALS INVOLVING POLAR PATHS MAY HAVE ERRORS AS GREAT AS ONE FIFTH A LANE OR MORE.</p>	<p>Use "Disturbance" instead of "anomaly" or "absorption".</p>

PIRACY/ARMED ROBBERY

B10

Key Subject	Comments
<p>CHART NR. _____ MV ALWAYS SAIL REPORTS ACT OF PIRACY/ARMED ROBBERY IN VICINITY 17-40N 095-08E AT 0600 UTC. TWO ZODIACS CARRYING 3 - 4 MEN EACH APPROACHING FROM ASTERN AT 20 KNOTS AT FIRST LIGHT. ATTEMPTED TO BOARD PORT SIDE AFT. REPELLED. CAUTION ADVISED.</p> <p>PIRACY ATTACKS/ARMED ROBBERY CONCENTRATED IN PHILLIP CHANNEL BETWEEN _____ AND _____. REPORTED ATTACKS ALWAYS OCCUR AT NIGHT. VESSELS ADVISED TO MAINTAIN ANTI-PIRACY WATCHES. ALL SUSPICIOUS OR UNEXPLAINED CRAFT MOVEMENTS OR PIRACY ATTACKS SHOULD BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO THE (NEAREST RCC, NATIONAL OR REGIONAL PIRACY CENTRE OR THE NEAREST POINT ON THE COAST WITH WHICH THEY CAN COMMUNICATE).</p>	<p>Broadcast as Safety message.</p> <p>Add amplifying information if available.</p> <p>(), for example, Regional Piracy Centre, KUALA LUMPUR, TEL: 60 3 2010014 FAX: 60 3 2385769 TELEX: MA 31880.</p>

SAR INFORMATION

B12

Key Subject	Comments
<p>DISTRESS ALERT RELAY. M/V NONSUCH REPORTED IN DISTRESS IN POSITION _____ N/S _____ E/W AT (DATE/TIME UTC). VESSELS ABLE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE CONTACT MRCC _____</p> <p>SHIP OVERDUE. M/V LOST AGAIN REPORTED OVERDUE ON VOYAGE FROM SYDNEY TO ROTTERDAM. LAST REPORTED IN VICINITY _____ N/S _____ E/W AT (DATE/TIME) UTC. REPORTS TO ANY RCC.</p>	<p>Use "Unknown vessel" where ship's name is not known.</p> <p>Add contact numbers for the MRCC if available. Radio channels should not be quoted since they are readily available from other sources.</p>

CANCELLATIONS

B13

Key Subject	Comments
<p>A. CANCEL 123/92 AND THIS MESSAGE.</p> <p>B. SELF CANCELLING. CANCEL AUSCOAST 42. SURVEY COMPLETE.</p> <p>C. (MESSAGE TEXT - EVENT OF KNOWN DURATION). CANCEL THIS MESSAGE _____ UTC.</p> <p>D. CANCEL TALLINN RADIO COAST WARNING 87/94 ON RECEIPT OF RUSSIAN NOTICE TO MARINERS 520/94; OR</p> <p>E. CANCEL TALLINN RADIO COAST WARNING 87/94. RUSSIAN NOTICE TO MARINERS 520/94 REFERS.</p>	<p>Stand alone cancellation messages may be in form A. or B.</p> <p>Only include a reason for the cancellation if it can be stated concisely and is not obvious.</p> <p>Choose a time for self cancelling messages (type C.) <u>one</u> hour after the event completes or <u>one</u> day later if time is not accurately known.</p>
<p>BULLETIN</p>	
<p>NAVAREA <u>XXX</u> WARNINGS IN FORCE. ONLY THOSE ISSUED IN THE LAST 42 DAYS ARE INCLUDED.</p> <p>XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX</p>	<p>Normally only includes those issued in previous 42 days.</p>

C1

DATE AND TIME

Time should always be quoted in UTC. The standard form is DDHHMM UTC MoMoMo YY;
e.g. 231642 UTC JUN 92.

POSITION

Position should always be given in Degrees, Minutes and decimal minutes in the form:

DD - MM.mm N or S
DDD - MM.mm E or W

e.g. 1) 32-18.65 S 2) 07-08.71 N
 165-02.81 E 039-17.21 W

Note that leading zeros should always be included. Three digits are used for reporting degrees Longitude.

Positions should only be quoted to the accuracy required. In many cases this will be less than the known accuracy. For example, it will often be sufficient to quote position to the nearest whole minute of Latitude and Longitude when indicating the location of a charted feature. The best accuracy available (to a maximum of 0.01 minutes) should be used when broadcasting the position of new hazards.

The same level of accuracy should always be quoted for both Latitude and Longitude.
