

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL MARITIME
CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION



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IMCO

LIGHT SIGNALS FOR VESSELS
ENGAGED IN FISHING

The Government of Iceland has requested the Secretary-General to communicate to all Member Governments the attached paper concerning special light signals indicating vessels engaged in fishing with purse seine and power-block.

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Special light signals
indicating vessels engaged in fishing
with purse seine and power-block

1. Some difficulties have arisen on the fishing grounds off Iceland as the fishermen, foreign and native, have been damaging each others' fishing gear by sailing into it at night, in spite of the lights now carried.

Icelandic fishermen have therefore been demanding some more efficient signals to indicate that they have their gear on the sides of their ships and to warn others to keep clear of them.

2. At the tenth session of the Maritime Safety Committee of the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), a paper was submitted by the Government of Iceland (Agenda Item 25, paper MSC X/26, dated 11 February 1965) regarding special light signals indicating vessels engaged in fishing with purse seine or drift nets.
3. This paper was discussed during the Maritime Safety Committee session. The views expressed therein were supported by some delegations; no delegation expressed views contrary to it but the majority of the delegations were not prepared to take any decision at that time.
4. The Maritime Safety Committee of IMCO also received information on the proceedings of the North East Atlantic Fishing Policing Conference, which at a recent meeting had considered the subject of lights

and shapes for fishing vessels handling their gear. The Committee took note of the fact that this Conference had decided that the Government of the United Kingdom, as Bureau power, be informed about the lights and shapes used at present by the fishing fleets of each country, with a view to reaching some agreement. If an agreement were reached, it would be notified to IMCO. If not, the information collected would be transmitted to IMCO for further consideration.

5. The Maritime Safety Committee of IMCO decided to await the results of the enquiry among the countries participating in the Fishing Policing Conference. Once this information has been collected and considered by the North East Atlantic Fishing Policing Conference, the Sub-Committee on the Revision of the International Code of Signals would be convened to examine it and, thereafter, the matter would again be considered by the Maritime Safety Committee.
6. It is understood that the next North East Atlantic Fishing Policing Conference will be convened in about a year. If that Conference reaches agreement on this item, they would notify IMCO about their decision as regards lights for fishing vessels. If no agreement is reached at that Conference, the information collected would, thereafter, have to be considered by IMCO.

It, therefore, looks as if it will take between one to two years before any decision can be reached.

7. The new development of herring fisheries in the North Atlantic with purse seine and power-block has already proved the need for special signals for these vessels in order to prevent accidents.

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8. The Government of Iceland, in view of the delay in formulating international agreement in this matter, intends to introduce, as an interim arrangement, special lights for purse seine vessels, in order to prevent collisions and to maintain, as far as possible, the safety of life at sea. In doing so, the Government of Iceland takes the view, that it is acting in conformity with Rule 9 (g) and Rule 13 (a) of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (1960). It is hoped that the experience gained in using these special signals on Icelandic vessels will be of value during later preparations for international agreement.
9. The special light signals are described in the Annex. These light signals have been slightly revised from IMCO Paper MSC X/26, in conformity with the views expressed by some delegates during the discussion at the Maritime Safety Committee session, e.g. the colour of the lights has been changed from green to amber, and the distance between the lights increased from 0,75 metres to 3 feet.
10. The Government of Iceland, therefore, requests the Secretary-General to circulate to all interested Governments a copy of this paper for their information.

ANNEX

Special light signals indicating vessels engaged in fishing with purse seine and power-block

These regulations concern Icelandic purse seiners and are issued under the provisions of the 1960 Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, Rule 13(a).

Article 1

A power-driven vessel engaged in fishing with purse seine and power-block may carry on top of the wheelhouse two amber-coloured lights, one vertically above the other, the lower at a height of at least 5 feet and the upper at a height of at least 8 feet above the sidelights. The lights shall be visible all round the horizon at a distance of at least 2 nautical miles and be flashing intermittently about once in a second, and in such a way that when the lower is out the upper is on and vice versa.

These lights may only be shown while the ship's free movement is hampered by its fishing gear, warning other ships to keep clear of it.

Article 2

These regulations shall enter into force on 12 November 1965.
