

Northland Regional Council

Harbourmaster's Guideline #1 – 2014/WHG

Whangarei Harbour – Guidance to Ships awaiting port entry

Purpose

To promote the safety of navigation in Whangarei Harbour by prescribing criteria for the safe navigation of ships awaiting berthing and pilotage.

This **Harbourmaster's Guidance** is issued to provide advice to all vessels that are awaiting berthing instructions and/or pilot availability at Whangarei. It specifically provides advice for those occasions when weather conditions are unfavourable for anchoring.

Harbourmaster's Guidance

All vessels in Whangarei harbour are required to maintain a listening watch on VHF Channel 19 (Whangarei Harbour Radio) and VHF Channel 16 (International calling and distress) to hear traffic calls relating to the movement of commercial shipping.

Application

This direction **applies to all vessels over 500 GT** when navigating within the coastal waters of Northland Regional Council, which extend out to 12 nautical miles from the coast.

Background

Whangarei Harbour hosts the deep water jetties and wharves operated by Refining NZ, Northport and the Portland cement works. The harbour runs a Dynamic Under-Keel Clearance (DUKC) system, and also has set weather limits for pilotage and berthing. The berths may also be occupied and there are thus occasions when berthing and or pilotage is not possible, and vessels are required to wait.

Two recommended anchorage areas are specified outside of the pilotage limits, notwithstanding these areas are not compulsory. However there will be occasions when pilotage is suspended due to adverse weather conditions and this same weather will preclude safe anchoring. Both anchorages are exposed and can experience severe sea conditions. If this is the case Master must make an early decision not to anchor, and to proceed seaward until pilotage is available.

Guidance to Vessels manoeuvring offshore awaiting pilotage.

As a rough guideline forecasts of winds over 30 knots shall prompt the master to consider taking action under this guideline. When pilotage is not available Masters shall take the following points into account when deciding if to anchor or stay at anchor:

- Present and forecast weather conditions
- The freeboard and safety of crew who may have to go forward
- Condition of windlass, known holding ability of the ships anchors, and ship's handling characteristics

- The mechanical state of the vessel, including ships engines, windlass reliability and speed, and any known defects or inefficient operating parameters of the vessel.

An early decision should be made to either proceed back to sea as soon as the vessel is advised a berth is not available, or to pick up anchor before conditions deteriorate and proceed to sea.

There are no rules at Whangarei regarding staying within harbour limits for queuing reasons. The vessel will be advised in good time when pilotage will be available, so there is no necessity to stay close to the harbour entrance in case they lose a priority. The pilotage providers will liaise with the vessel's agent and provide early advice on berthing opportunities. However the vessel's priority in adverse weather is to stay a safe distance from the coast until advice is received to proceed to the pilot station.

Once the Master has decided the safest option is to manoeuvre offshore, the following points should be taken into account:

- A passage plan for the offshore route should be provided and the bridge team briefed, particularly regarding turning points and closest points of approach to hazards.
- The duration and severity of the forecast shall be taken into account.
- A safe distance must be maintained from the shoreline, islands and any hazards. A minimum closest point of approach of at least 8 nautical miles shall be maintained from the coast, and 5 nautical miles from any islands.
- Allowance should be made for difficulty of turning in heavy seas and due regard given to the manoeuvrability of the vessel.
- The Area to be Avoided extending from Bream Head to the Poor Knights shall not be entered.

Options the Master may consider are to leave the area and head towards the Hauraki Gulf to find shelter, or to proceed further out to sea.

Legislation

These Harbourmaster's guidelines are issued pursuant to Section 33F(1)(c) of the Maritime Transport Act 1994 (MTA) and prescribe navigation requirements for all vessels navigating in Whangarei Harbour and the Northland waters with respect to the movement of ships over 500 GT.

Responsibility

The Master is ultimately responsible for the safety of the vessel.

(1) Nothing in this Part will exonerate any vessel, its owner, master, or crew, from the consequences of any neglect to comply with any precaution which may be required by the ordinary practice of seafarers, or the special circumstances of the case.

(2) In interpreting and complying with these guidelines, due regard must be given to all dangers of navigation, collision, and any special circumstances, including the limitations of the vessels involved, that may make a departure from these guidelines necessary to avoid immediate danger.

Liability

Nothing in this Harbourmaster's Direction relieves the master (skipper), crew or operator of any vessel of his or her obligation to comply with the requirements of maritime rules, local bylaws and safety management systems that may be applicable.

Northland Regional Council shall not, under any circumstances or conditions, be responsible for any loss arising from the negligence of the master (skipper), crew or operator of any vessel.