



# From the Captain of the Port

## Wrapping Up the Rules

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With summer behind us, we'll continue to cover Rules that might not warrant a full column by themselves. It's hard to find a topic more important than the COLREGs, so let's be sure we cover them all!

**Rule 1 says** – “These Rules shall apply to all vessels upon the high seas and in all waters connected therewith navigable by seagoing vessels.”

**Rule 1 means** – The COLREGs apply to all of the oceans and bodies of water connected to them with respect to the United States Inland Rules which apply to the Great Lakes, Western Rivers and all the waterways and bays inside the magenta COLREGs demarcation line printed on your charts. Many boaters believe the Inland Rules apply uniformly anytime they are within 3 nm of shore. Not so! The demarcation line runs along the south shore of Long Island from Montauk Point to New York Harbor – right across the inlet mouths.

**Rule 3 says** – “For the purpose of these Rules (and this Act), except where the context otherwise requires, the word ‘vessel’ includes every description of water craft, including non-displacement craft, WIG craft and seaplanes, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.”

**Rule 3 means** – Don't be surprised if the U.S. Coast Guard comes alongside to inspect your homemade raft, inner-tube or a log you're tied to.

**Rule 4, Section 1, Conduct of Vessels in any Condition of Visibility,** says – “Rules in this Section apply to any condition of visibility.”

**This means** – “Neither Rain, nor Sleet, nor gloom of night” matter in applying Rules 5-10 to the facts of a case or in the interpretation of their use by the master of a vessel.

**Rule 11, Section 2, Conduct of Vessels in Sight of One Another,** says – “Rules in this Section apply to vessels in sight of each other.”

**This means** – Rules 12-18 apply to the facts of a case or in the interpretation of their use by the master of a vessel if the vessels can see each other – the use of radar is not implied since the word “sight” is explicit.

### Rule 28

Rule 28 is about the Shapes and Lights that a vessel “constrained by her draft” uses to proclaim that she's drawing pretty much all the water there is – so don't even think about her moving out of

the channel for you. The Shape is a cylinder (think “beer can”) and her Light, in addition to running lights consistent with her length, is 3 all-around red lights in a vertical row. Guess where there are no rights to proclaim you are “constrained by draft?” In the Inland waters.

### Rule 29

Rule 29 is about the Shapes and Lights that a vessel carrying a “pilot” uses to proclaim that she is involved in “pilotage.” First, there is no Shape. Her Light, in addition to running lights consistent with her length, is two lights in a vertical line near or at the masthead – white over red (the opposite of the Fishing Light “red over white, we be fishing tonight.”) Her Sound, by the way, is 4 short blasts on the whistle – “Pilot aboard, Stand well clear.”

### Rule 30

Rule 30 is about the Shapes and Lights that a vessel “at anchor” or “hard aground” uses to say “I'm staying right here.” With respect to a vessel hard aground, she really is “staying right here” because, unlike a vessel at anchor, she will not swing when the wind shifts.

A vessel of 50 meters or greater and at anchor must display two white all-around lights – one in the forepart of the vessel and high enough so that is well above the second all-around white light at the stern. In lieu of the fore light, she may display 1 “ball” as her Shape. If she is 100 meters or greater, she must also use her working lights to illuminate her decks between the anchor lights or shape and anchor light. Vessels less than 50 meters need only use the 1 all-around light at the stern.

If she's hard aground, she must also display two red lights in a vertical line or 3 balls in a line. The vessel less than 12 meters is not required to display her ignominy.

### Rule 31

Rule 31 is about the Shapes and Lights for a vessel that is in reality a seaplane (but afloat.) These “vessels” get a “pass” to a certain extent because they also have light requirements associated with their primary purpose – an aeronautical craft. So, she “shall exhibit Lights and Shapes as closely similar in characteristics and position as is possible.”

I hope these columns have made the Rules easier to understand. Watch this space for seamanship topics starting next month.

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