



THE RULES FOR PREVENTING COLLISIONS AT SEA AND
LIABILITY FOR COLLISION BETWEEN SHIPS
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COLREGs

International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (London Convention, 20 October 1972).

Steering and sailing rules relevant in order to establish the element of fault in the event of a collision

INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

Exploratory study by the IMO Legal Committee

Origin of COLREGs: the acknowledgement of good seamanship

Risks related to their amendment before the full advent of autonomous navigation

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Part A - General Provisions

Rule 1 (a) "These Rules shall apply to **all vessels** upon the high seas and in all waters connected therewith navigable by seagoing vessels"

Rule 3 (a) "The word "vessel" includes **every description of water craft** [...] used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water"

Neutrality of the Rules with regard to the existence of the crew on board.

Rule 2

Rule 2 (Responsibility)

"Nothing in these Rules shall exonerate any vessel, or the owner, master or crew thereof, from the consequences [...] of the neglect of any precaution which may be required by the ordinary practice of seamen, or by the special circumstances of the case"

Precedence of good seamanship over a strict observance of the steering and sailing Rules

Contextual relation between the exercise of human judgement and the decision-making process

Compatibility with remote-controlled navigation and autonomous navigation performed with human supervision

Incompatibility with fully autonomous navigation

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Part B - Steering and sailing rules

Rule 5 “Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision”

autonomy of information-gathering with regard to the decision-making process

compatibility with remote-controlled navigation

non-compatibility with fully autonomous navigation

Rule 18

Rule 18 (Responsibilities between vessels)

“Except where Rules 9, 10 and 13 otherwise require:

A) A power-driven vessel underway shall keep out the way of: i) a vessel not under command [...].”

Rule 3 (f) “The term ‘vessel not under command’ means a vessel which through some exceptional circumstance is unable to manoeuvre as required by these Rules and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel.

Communication failures – signalling systems -
insufficiency

Part B - Steering and sailing rules

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Rule 18

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Remote-controlled navigation
Autonomous navigation performed with human
supervision

broadly compatible
with the current wording

Fully autonomous navigation

incompatible
with the current wording

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