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I M C O

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NAVIGATION IN CONGESTED AREAS

At the request of the Government of the United States
... of America, the attached note on the establishment of sea
lanes for New York and Philadelphia is circulated, for
information, to all IMCO Member Governments and Contracting
Governments to the International Convention for the Safety
of Life at Sea, 1960.

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NEWS



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SAFETY SHIPPING LANES ESTABLISHED
FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC CONTROL

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 12 - In an effort to reduce the risk of collisions in the crowded approaches to principal seaports, the United States Coast Guard today announced the establishment of the nation's first peacetime ocean sea lanes for water-borne commerce.

The action by the Coast Guard approves the recommendations made by a joint maritime industry-government Sea Lane Study group which for more than 10 months engaged in developing a traffic control safety pattern for use by vessels entering and departing the port of New York. Recommendations made by a second Study group for the port of Philadelphia, were also adopted.

With more than 25,000 vessels entering and leaving the port of New York each year, it is anticipated that use of the established safety routes will greatly reduce the dangers of collision in the heavily congested waters leading to the harbor.

A number of collisions involving New York shipping have occurred in recent years. The Andrea Doria-Stockholm crash and that of the Israeli liner Shalom with the Norwegian tanker Stolt Dagali, each with tragic loss of life, both occurred in waters which will now be serviced by the new safety lanes.

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Basically, the Sea Lane system consists in the establishment of two-way shipping lanes leading to the entrance to major harbors, with inward and outward bound traffic separated by a defined safety buffer zone, similar to the center dividing strip on major highways. Three such two-way lanes have been approved for the port of New York and two others are being established that will lead to the entrance to Delaware Bay, the gateway to the port of Philadelphia.

A circle with a radius of seven miles is to be established around the Ambrose Light Station at the entrance to New York harbor, and the approved Sea Lanes will fan out from the circumference of the circle. One lane, for use of North Atlantic traffic will extend due east to the Nantucket Lightship; a second southeasterly for South America, Africa and West Indies trade, and a third due south, for Atlantic coastal shipping.

The inward and outward bound corridors of each lane will taper from a maximum width of 5 miles, to a minimum of 1 mile at the Ambrose Light entrance circle. The dividing safety buffer zones will taper from 3 miles to 1 mile, over the same distance.

Implementation of the New York Sea Lanes is scheduled for the month of April and for the port of Philadelphia in March. Widespread advance notification of the establishment of the lanes is presently being made to both domestic and foreign shipping.

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Development of the Sea Lane plan for New York was undertaken by a committee headed by Commodore John W. Anderson, retired master of the superliner, United States, in July 1965. The committee included representatives of the U. S. Coast Guard, the U. S. Corps of Engineers, the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, The American Merchant Marine Institute, the Sandy Hook Pilots and other marine interests.

Designation of the Study group by the Coast Guard resulted from the adoption of a regulation by the International Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention, which came into force in 1965 and which gave the signatory nations the right to assist steamship companies "in the selection of routes and the initiation of action with regard to them, and the delineation of what constitutes converging areas." Both foreign and domestic steamship lines are being requested to implement the purpose of establishing safety Sea Lanes by directing the masters of their ships to utilize the designated routes.

Existing Coast and Geodetic Survey navigation charts covering approaches to New York and the Delaware Bay areas will be overprinted to reflect the Sea Lane installations and the navigation aids which are to be used in marking them. Complete reprinting of each is scheduled during 1967.

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Similar Sea Lane studies are to be conducted under the District Coast Guard Commanders at Boston, Norfolk and Miami with a view of possible establishment of additional sea lanes for congested ports within those districts. Such a study has already been concluded for the port of San Francisco and other West Coast ports are under consideration.

The idea of separating ocean vessels moving in opposite directions is not new. It has been used since 1911 with good results on the Great Lakes, where it was adopted by agreement between the two shipping trade associations representing most United States and Canadian ship operators.

Similar voluntary ship traffic systems are also in use in the English Channel, in the vicinity of Gibraltar and in the Persian Gulf. A North Atlantic Track Line Agreement involving 16 shipping companies under 6 different flags was established following the Titanic disaster in 1912 and is widely utilized to keep shipping clear of the northern ice menace.

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