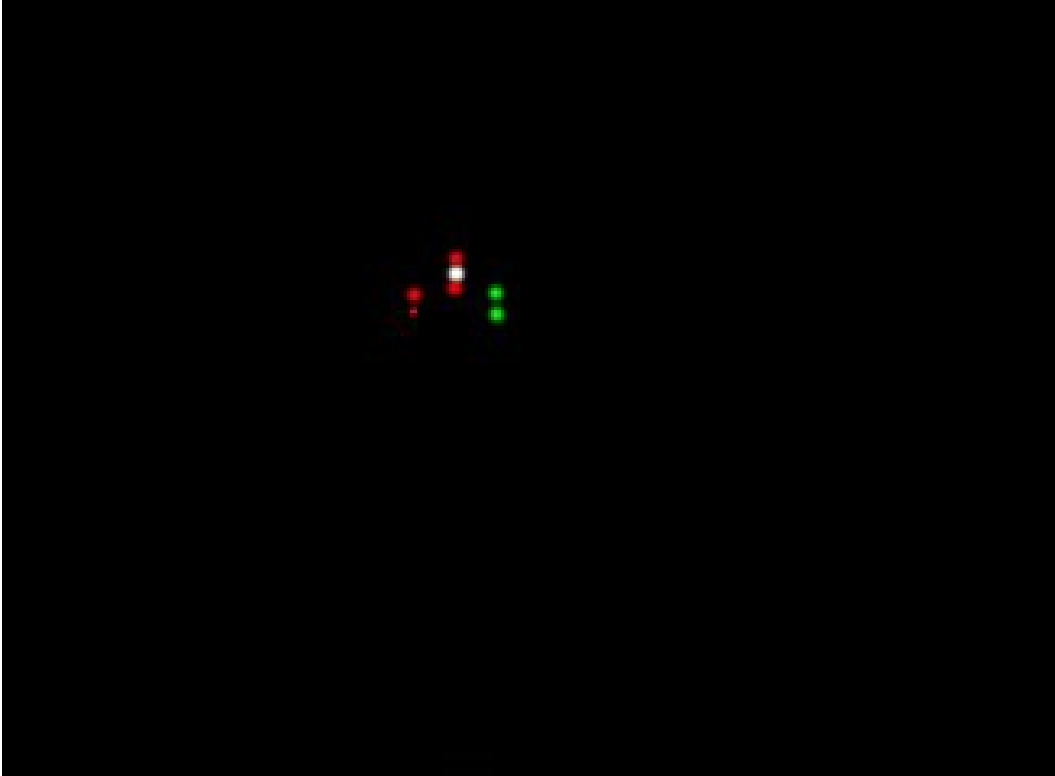


2. Recognizing Lights at Night

November 2, 2016 Marc Hughston

Imagine that it's a pitch black night, and you are exiting Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard. You see these lights up ahead. What kind of vessel is this? Do you give way to it, or do you stand on? Which side should you pass on?



Scroll down to see the vessel



This dredge is working in the entrance to Channel Islands Harbor. In the daytime it shows the day shapes for a vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver – the Ball, Diamond, and Ball above the wheel house. At night, she shows Red, White, and Red lights in a vertical line.

The safe side to pass on is indicated by the two black Diamonds on the right side of the wheel house, though the lower one is obscured. At night, this is indicated by two Green lights in a vertical line.

The danger side is indicated by the two black Balls on the left side of the wheel house, indicated at night by two Red lights in a vertical line.

In the Navigation Rules, Rule 3 *General Definitions*, section (g), states in part, “The term ‘vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver’ means a vessel which from the nature of her work is restricted in her ability to maneuver as required by these Rules and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel.”

This is a good example of a vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver. You can see it has nothing to do with being big, slow, or difficult to turn or stop. This vessel has gear in the water sucking sand off the bottom, and it is connected to a huge hose that runs ashore where the sand and water is pumped out. This vessel simply cannot maneuver to keep out of your way, and that is what “restricted in her ability to maneuver” means.

Scroll down for a visual aid to interpreting lights at night.

Quick Reference Navigation Rules

INTERNATIONAL COLREGS AND INLAND RULES OF THE NAUTICAL ROAD

Adapted from U.S. COAST GUARD NAVIGATION RULES INTERNATIONAL & INLAND COMBINED 1987/2006 They show general guidelines. Please verify for particular situations in the COAST GUARD RULES.

RISK OF COLLISION EXISTS IF:

- ANOTHER VESSEL'S BEARING DOES NOT CHANGE
- OR CHANGES VERY LITTLE RELATIVE TO YOU

TO AVOID COLLISION: DON'T CROSS AHEAD

- MAKE EARLY & OBVIOUS COURSE AND SPEED CHANGES
- SLOW, STOP OR REVERSE IF NECESSARY

IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT BETWEEN: CROSSING AND

- MEETING HEAD ON: ASSUME THAT YOU ARE MEETING HEAD ON, AND PASS PORT TO PORT (see RIGHT OF WAY, below)
- OVERTAKING: ASSUME YOU ARE OVERTAKING, AND GIVE WAY

DISTRESS SIGNALS



- ★ **DO NOT FAIL TO COMPLY WITH THE RULES OR PRECAUTIONS GOVERNED BY GOOD SEAMANSHIP OR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.**
- ★ **IF ALL ELSE FAILS, THE RULES MAY BE BROKEN TO AVOID IMMINENT DANGER.**
- ★ **ALWAYS MAINTAIN A PROPER LOOKOUT BY SIGHT, HEARING AND OTHER AVAILABLE MEANS.**
- ★ **STAY WELL CLEAR OF LIGHTS YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND.**
- ★ **PROCEED AT A SAFE SPEED AT ALL TIMES.**

IN RESTRICTED VISIBILITY: FOG • RAIN • SNOW

- PROCEED AT A SAFE SPEED • THERE IS NO GIVE WAY VESSEL
- USE ONLY FOG SIGNALS • "IN SIGHT" SIGNALS DO NOT APPLY

IF YOU TAKE AVOIDING ACTION BASED ON RADAR:

- TAKE EARLY POSITIVE ACTION, BUT AVOID COURSE CHANGES:
- 1. TO PORT FOR A VESSEL AHEAD, EXCEPT WHEN OVERTAKING
- 2. TOWARD A VESSEL ABEAM OR AFT YOUR BEAM

IF YOU HEAR A FOG SIGNAL AHEAD:

- SLOW TO MINIMUM SPEED OR STOP; THEN PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY UNTIL YOU'VE DETERMINED THAT THERE IS NO RISK OF COLLISION

RIGHT OF WAY

STAND ON VESSEL: MAINTAINS COURSE & SPEED

GIVE WAY VESSEL: MUST KEEP WELL CLEAR

VESSEL ABOVE THE LINE IS STAND ON AND ALWAYS HAS THE RIGHT OF WAY, BUT

SHALL TAKE ACTION TO AVOID COLLISION IF GIVE WAY VESSEL DOES NOT TAKE TIMELY, SUFFICIENT, AND APPROPRIATE ACTION

IF YOU ARE: ABOVE LINE YOU HAVE RIGHT OF WAY

1. MEETING HEAD ON: PASS PORT TO PORT
2. CROSSING: STARBOARD VESSEL PORT VESSEL
3. OVERTAKEN (from more than 22.5° abaft your beam) OVERTAKING (includes sail overtaking power)
4. SAILING: STBD TACK if on same LEEWARD PORT TACK tack, then: WINDWARD
5. RESTRICTED TO NARROW CHANNELS UNDER 20 METERS OR FISHING OR SAILING
6. IN A TRAFFIC PATTERN CROSSING A TRAFFIC PATTERN
7. NOT UNDER COMMAND RESTRICTED IN MANEUVERABILITY CONstrained BY DRAFT (international only), COMMERCIAL FISHING (with gear in the water) SAILING POWER DRIVEN Give way to vessels above you on this list (# 7)

SOUND SIGNALS

SHORT BLAST ● = 1 second; PROLONGED BLAST ■ = 4 - 6 seconds

IN SIGHT VISUALLY USE ONLY WHEN IN SIGHT VISUALLY, NOT

IN RESTRICTED VISIBILITY (FOG SIGNALS)

WHEN: INTERNATIONAL INLAND

CROSSING "I am changing course" and if overtaken must take action for safe passage

OVERTAKING (only in narrow channels and if overtaken must take action for safe passage)

OBSCURED BEND approaching vessel answers

"I intend to leave you" to:

my PORT ●, my STBD ●● answering vessel: uses same signal if in agreement "Engines in reverse" ●●●●

(in all situations)

also signal when leaving berth

to your STBD ■■■■ to your PORT ●●●●

to your STBD ●●●● to your PORT ●●●●

if OK, then overtaken answers same signal (● or ●●)

if OK, overtaken answers same signal (● or ●●)

IF IN DOUBT OR DANGER ●●●● OR MORE

1. POWER: MAKING WAY

signal ■■ every 2 minutes

2. POWER: NOT MAKING WAY

signal ■■ every 2 minutes

3. ANCHORED:

5 second bell every 1 minute and may add ●●●●

4. AGROUND:

same as anchored, and add 3 bell strokes before and after 5 second bell

5. PILOT: as above; and may add ●●●●

6. signal ■■ every 2 minutes if you are:

- SAILING
- FISHING (underway or anchored)
- NOT UNDER COMMAND
- CONSTRAINED BY DRAFT (international)
- RESTRICTED IN MANEUVERABILITY
- TOWING or PUSHING

7. TOWED & MANNED ■■●●● / 2 mins

NAVIGATION LIGHTS

ZONES OF APPROACH



LIGHTS YOU SEE on a power driven vessel (50m+) when you're OVERTAKING

CROSSING from STBD from PORT HEAD-ON

Stem light only is visible from more than 22.5° abaft the beam of the other vessel. (Except special all around lights). If distance decreases, you are overtaking & must always give way.

Masthead lights will be seen first. When you are crossing from starboard, right (forward) light is lower (& vice versa). When crossing, mast-head lights separate, then close again. If you see red (port) sidelight you must give way.

If approaching head-on, both red & green sidelights are visible. First choice: come right & pass port to port. Green light will disappear. If not you may be in danger of collision.

1. POWER DRIVEN PILOT BOAT ALSO DISPLAYS (WITHOUT MASTHEAD LIGHT)	2. POWER DRIVEN UNDER 12 meters MAY USE COMBINATION SIDELIGHT INTERNATIONAL: UNDER 7 M & 7 KNOTS SIDELIGHTS OPTIONAL	3. SAIL MAY BE ADDED IF ALSO UNDER POWER: USE SAME LIGHTS AS AT - OR THIS DAYSHAPE	4. SAIL UNDER 20 meters MAY USE THIS COMBO LIGHT IF UNDER 7 meters USING SAIL OR GARR, A FLASHLIGHT MAY BE DISPLAYED	5. ANCHORED 50 meters & OVER: ADD LOWER LIGHT AFT 100 m & OVER: ADD DECK LIGHTS
6. TOWING ASTERN OVER 200 meters TOW DISPLAYS SIDE & STERN LIGHTS 200 M & UNDER - 2 MASTHEAD LIGHTS	7. TOWING ALONGSIDE INLAND: TUG DISPLAYS 2 YELLOW TOW LIGHTS AND NO STERN LIGHT	8. PUSHING AHEAD SIDELIGHTS ARE SHOWN ON BOW INLAND: 2 YELLOW TOW, NO STERN LIGHT, A BARGE SHOWS FLASHING YELLOW ON BOW	9. FISHING OR A BASKET IF UNDER 20 m GEAR OUT - 150 m or IN DIRECTION OF GEAR SIDE & STERN LIGHTS OFF WHEN NOT MAKING WAY	10. TRAWLING OR A BASKET IF UNDER 20 m
11. RESTRICTED MANEUVERABILITY CAUTION SIDE SAFE SIDE	12. UNDERWATER OPERATIONS (DREDGING) CAUTION SIDE SAFE SIDE	13. TOWING CAN'T DEVIATE TOW 300 m or less USE 2 MASTHEAD LIGHTS	14. CONSTRAINED BY DRAFT INTERNATIONAL ONLY	15. AGROUND NOT UNDER COMMAND

You can buy the card pictured above at West Marine. It includes sound signals, and on the other side, aids to navigation. Keep this in your sailing bag for reference when you need help interpreting lights at night.