

## AUTORIDAD DEL CANAL DE PANAMÁ OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

### OP'S ADVISORY TO SHIPPING No. A-21-2011

October 26, 2011

**TO :** All Shipping Agents, Owners, and Operators  
**SUBJECT:** REMINDER OF PANAMA CANAL'S VISIBILITY  
AND PILOT PLATFORM REQUIREMENTS

The Panama Canal Authority reminds all customers that vessels arriving at Canal waters, whether for docking or transiting the Canal, must comply with the visibility requirements from the navigation bridge, as stated in the Maritime Regulations for the Operation of the Panama Canal and OP's Notice to Shipping No. N-1-2011, "Vessel Requirements", which states:

- For laden vessels, the view of the water surface from any conning position in the navigation bridge shall not be obscured by more than one (1) ship length forward of the bow, under all conditions of draft and trim.
- For vessels in ballast (not laden), the view of the water surface from any conning position in the navigation bridge shall not be obscured by more than one and one half (1.5) ship lengths forward of the bow, under all conditions of draft and trim.
- If the visibility from any of the normal conning positions is obscured by cargo gear or other permanent obstructions forward of the navigation bridge, the total arc of obstructed visibility from Conning Position 1 shall not exceed 15 degrees.
- The side hull plating at the vessel's waterline, fore and aft, must be visible from the conning positions on the bridge wings.

Vessels that fail to comply with ACP's visibility requirements due to cargo, cargo gear, structures, or any other reason, must inform the ACP of their visibility condition at least 48 hours prior to arrival in order to be properly scheduled and minimize delays.

Vessels over 150 feet LOA are required to report their blind distance<sup>1</sup> (in ship lengths), calculated for Tropical Salt Water, from conning positions 1, 2, and 3, because all transits through or visits to the Canal begin and end in salt water. Please note that the visibility requirements are applicable and have always been applied in salt water since first implemented in 1979. Advisory A-14-2009 mistakenly requested that vessels calculate the blind distance in Tropical Fresh Water instead of in Tropical Salt Water. Advisory A-16-2011 corrected this mistake by requesting vessels to calculate the blind distance in Tropical Salt Water.

Vessels 150 feet LOA or less must have a forward visibility that allows navigation ranges and aids to navigation to be visible from all navigation bridge conning positions. Vessels intending to dock prior to transit must provide the visibility condition for docking and for transit. Vessels intending to dock only (local calls), must also provide the undocking visibility condition.

Vessels are required to provide the ACP with the aforementioned information only when they do not comply with ACP's visibility requirements. Vessels arriving at Canal waters without previously submitting this information will be deemed in compliance and will be scheduled accordingly. However, if any deficiencies are detected upon arrival, the vessel may be subject to delays for transit or docking, and assessed additional charges.

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<sup>1</sup> "Blind Distance" is the forward distance from the bow of the vessel to the closest point on the water's surface which can be seen from all conning positions in the navigation bridge. An observer's height of eye of 1.80 meters above the bridge deck must be used to determine this distance, and must be reported in ship lengths. The Blind Distance at conning position #1 is not applicable to vessels with centerline cranes. All vessels must be ready to provide upon arrival ACP boarding officers their Blind Distance calculated for tropical salt water at conning positions 1, 2 and 3.

**AUTORIDAD DEL CANAL DE PANAMÁ**  
**OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT**

3654-A (OPXI)  
v. 28-01-2011

OP, October 26, 2011

Subject: Reminder of Panama Canal's Visibility and Pilot Platform Requirements

The ACP will determine the conditions under which non-compliant vessels may be allowed to transit or dock. Vessels that require additional resources due to their visibility condition or other deficiencies, will be assessed the corresponding charges, depending on the advance notification of the condition. Full container vessels that fail to meet ACP's minimum visibility requirements will continue to be assessed ACP official tariffs (item number 1060.5100 or 1060.5110), depending on when the advanced notification of their condition was made.

All vessels with length overall of 700 feet (213.36 m) or more and extreme beam of 100 feet (30.48m) or more found to have restricted visibility may require additional pilots and as such will need to provide pilot platforms, as already required for container vessels, in accordance with Paragraph 3.a (3) and Figure 2 of OP's Notice to Shipping No. N-1-2011, "Vessel Requirements".

For more information regarding possible charges due to restricted visibility, please refer to OP's Notice to Shipping N-1-2011, Paragraph 21.

The "Pre-Arrival Vessel Information" form 1743 (OPT) available at: [www.pancanal.com/common/maritime/forms/1743.xls](http://www.pancanal.com/common/maritime/forms/1743.xls) shall be used to report the visibility conditions at least 48 hours prior to arrival to [eta@pancanal.com](mailto:eta@pancanal.com). The "Blind Distance Declaration" form 1746 (OPTC-A), available at [www.pancanal.com/common/maritime/forms/1746.pdf](http://www.pancanal.com/common/maritime/forms/1746.pdf) shall be completed by the master and presented to the ACP Boarding Officer upon arrival at Canal waters. For full container vessels, the visibility condition shall continue to be reported through EDCS, and the blind distance shall be reported using the abovementioned forms.

**ORIGINAL SIGNED**

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Manuel E. Benítez  
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