

**[HPCG MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 01-09,
February 05, 2009]**

**GUIDELINES ON MOVEMENT OF VESSELS DURING HEAVY
WEATHER**

I. AUTHORITY:

RA 5173 as amended by PD 601

II. PURPOSE:

To prescribe policies and procedures in order to enhance maritime safety during the occurrence of tropical depression, storm or typhoon in the Philippine area of responsibility.

III. APPLICATION:

This circular shall apply to all vessels operating within the territorial jurisdiction of the Republic of the Philippines.

IV. EXEMPTIONS:

- A. Tugboats purposely used in assisting vessels in docking or undocking to or from berthing piers or wharves;
- B. Government-operated vessels used for non-commercial purposes; and
- C. Vessels called upon by the PCG to assist in a specific search and rescue operation.

V. DEFINITION OF TERMS:

- A. Heavy Weather – refers to the violent atmospheric conditions of wind and sea such as the occurrence of tropical depression, storm or typhoon.
- B. MARINA – Maritime Industry Authority
- C. PAGASA - Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration
- D. PCG – Philippine Coast Guard

- E. PPA – Philippine Ports Authority
- F. Public Storm Warning Signal (PSWS) Nr 1 - declared if winds of 30-60 kph (approximately 16 – 32 knots) are expected in the locality in at least 36 hours.
- G. Public Storm Warning Signal (PSWS) Nr 2 - raised if winds of greater than 60 kph up to 100 kph (approximately 33-54 knots) are expected in the locality in at least 24 hours.
- H. Public Storm Warning Signal (PSWS) Nr 3 - raised if winds of greater than 100 kph up to 185 kph (approximately 54-100 knots) are expected in the locality in at least 18 hours.
- I. Public Storm Warning Signal (PSWS) Nr 4 - raised if winds of greater than 185 kph (approximately 100 knots and above) are expected in the locality in at least 12 hours.
- J. Public Storm Warning Signal (PSWS) Sector – refers to areas covered by PSWS Nr. 1 or PSWS Nr. 2 and higher which are shown with corresponding color codes, as provided in PAGASA website.
- K. Route – as used in this circular, is defined as a way or course, taken or planned to be taken, in navigating from a point of origin to a point of destination, as differentiated from the word “route” used in MARINA issued franchises.
- L. Vessel – under this circular, refers to any ship, watercraft or other conveyances used or capable of being used as means of transportation.

VI. POLICIES:

- A. Vessels of 1,000 gross tons or below shall not sail, except to take shelter, when PSWS number 1 is hoisted within its point of origin or route or point of destination.
- B. Movement of vessels above 1,000 gross tons is left to the discretion and responsibility of the ship owner and master when PSWS number 1 is hoisted within its point of origin or route or point of destination.
- C. Vessels of any tonnage shall not sail, except to take shelter, when PSWS number 2 or higher is hoisted within its point of origin or route or point of destination.
- D. Masters and ship owners of vessels above 1,000 gross tons who, based on the intent of this Circular, are given or left with the discretion to sail during a storm shall exercise extra precautionary measures and carefully study the possible effect of a storm to the vessel's voyage with due regard to the forecasted track, wind force and radius of the storm in reference to weather bulletins and Tropical Cyclone Warning for Shipping issued by PAGASA every 0500H, 1100H, 1700H and 2300H.

- E. Vessels sailing for the purpose of taking shelter shall depart without passengers. Cargoes already loaded onboard the vessel may be permitted to remain onboard provided that maximum precautionary measures shall be observed by ensuring that proper lashing and stowage are strictly followed.
- F. It is the decision and responsibility of the Master and ship owner of the vessel to ensure the safety of the ship and crew whenever they decide to take shelter.
- G. Vessels shall not sail when its point of origin or route or point of destination is within an applicable PSWS Sector where it is not allowed to sail (as provided in paragraphs A and C) based on the latest PAGASA weather bulletin.
- H. In no way shall ship owners and Masters of vessels depart from the intent of this circular by violating the objective of the provision hereof on taking shelter.
- I. Ship owners and Masters shall exercise extra-ordinary diligence required by law for common carriers in ensuring the safety of life and property at sea.

VII. PROCEDURES:

- A. Every Master or any person in charge of a vessel, including the ship owner/operator shall consider the safety of life at sea to take precedence at all times.
- B. The Master or any person in charge of a vessel, including the ship owner/operator shall ensure that the latest weather bulletin is obtained and the track of the typhoon and the PSWS Sectors are plotted on the weather chart aboard ship and at the company operations center or office.
- C. When an applicable PSWS number (as provided by Section VI of this circular) is hoisted in the port where a vessel is located or along its route or point of destination, the Master or Patron, when based on his judgment, there is probable danger due to a typhoon, shall prior to the vessel's departure, inform the nearest PCG unit in writing (as may be applicable), of his decision to take shelter in a safer place or to avoid the path of the storm, attesting therein that the decision to leave port is his, in consultation with the ship owner.
- D. The Master or Patron shall disembark passengers and institute maximum precautionary measures to properly stow and secure cargoes, as prescribed by MARINA, that are already onboard before leaving port to take shelter at a safer place. Cargo watches who are tasked to ensure the safe condition of cargoes during the entire voyage/ sheltering shall be posted.
- E. If already underway when an applicable PSWS number (as provided by Section VI of this circular) is hoisted in its immediate vicinity, or along its route or destination, the Master or Patron shall take no other option except to avoid the path of the storm and take shelter and promptly inform the ship owner and the nearest Coast Guard unit. Ship owners/ operators shall ensure that Masters maintain continuous communication with them and shall immediately report to the Coast Guard the ship's compliance to this circular.