



South African Maritime Safety Authority

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SM10/4/5

Date: 21 June 2017

Marine Notice No. 12 of 2017

Heeding of Marine Weather Forecasts

TO ALL SHIP OPERATORS, MASTERS, FISHING SKIPPERS, SMALL VESSEL SKIPPERS, SURVEYORS AND PRINCIPAL OFFICERS.

Summary

This Marine Notice serves to highlight the importance of heeding weather forecasts for Owners, Operators, Masters, Skippers and Deck Officers.

The importance of heeding weather forecasts by skippers and preparing the vessel and crews for inclement weather was highlighted during findings in a recent Court of Marine Enquiry that deliberated on the contributing factors that led to the loss of lives off a fishing vessel. This notice endeavours to advise all operators. Masters and skippers should keep themselves informed on weather forecasts in order to have sufficient time to avoid any weather conditions that could threaten the safety of his/her vessel and crew and take the appropriate safety precautions.

1. Weather warning:

Marine weather forecasts include four types of severe weather warnings: strong wind, gale, storm and hurricane force winds.

- Strong Wind Warning: winds 20 to 33 knots – wave heights 2 to 3 metres.
- Gale Warning: winds 34 to 47 knots – wave heights 6 to 9 metres.
- Storm Warning: winds 48 to 63 knots – wave heights 9 to 16 metres.
- Hurricane Force Warning: winds 64 knots and over – wave heights over 16 metres.

2. Severe sea states:

Severe seas of any kind are dangerous if you are not prepared. Skippers should take special care in the following situations.

- In beam seas, excessive roll can cause cargo to shift, creating a dangerous list. This could cause the vessel to capsize. Strong breaking waves could also capsize the vessel.
- In following seas, a vessel may lose stability on a wave crest. If a vessel is overtaken by a wave crest, broaching may occur.
- In quartering seas, the problems of beam and following seas are combined. Quartering seas represent the most dangerous situation in severe weather.
- Thunderstorms: The strongest winds in a thunderstorm usually precede the storm centre itself, in a zone up to three miles long. Gusts up to 50 knots can be expected in this zone.

See Marine Notice 1 of 1996, Guidance to the Master for Avoiding Dangerous Situations in Following and Quartering Seas, Marine Notice 2 of 2008, Surfing or Broaching of Small Craft in a following sea

3. South African Weather Service:

South African Weather Service (“SA Weather Service”) prepares a variety of forecasts which include but are not limited to a general forecast intended for the public; a specialised forecast focused on aviation; shipping forecasts as well as fire danger index forecasts. The forecasts are put into different bulletins and sent to specific sectors for whom the forecasts are meant.

SAWS does not send a warning out for periods shorter than 24 hours. So generally, if SAWS expects something to happen, they give an advisory. But if SAWS are almost hundred percent sure that it’s going to happen they send a warning. The reason for this is that Disaster Management agencies and the like don’t have to be on standby with advisories; they have to be on standby with a warning.

It is important to emphasise that a weather warning will result in the weather as reflected in the warning, that is to say, the weather warning will almost certainly become the actual weather.

Skippers must be aware of the fact that area specific weather warnings will apply to coastal waters up to 50 nautical miles from shore and that high seas forecasts cover the areas beyond 50 nautical miles from the shore line.

The SAWB forecast opening statement should be borne in mind when considering forecasted weather. The opening statement reads as follows:

Wind in Knots, Wave heights in metres. No sea state given if waves less than 2m

Note the wind speeds quoted here are the expected average speeds. Individual gusts may exceed these values by a factor of up to 1.5. Wave heights are significant wave heights which may be accompanied by individual waves 1.5 to 2.0 times higher.

These estimates of winds and waves do not take into account the enhancing effects of the agulhas current off the South African East Coast.

Radio Weather forecasts are also available on VHF.

Radio Weather Bulletins & Navigational Warnings: 10h15 UTC & 18h15 UTC daily.

UTC: Coordinated Universal Time - the international basis for other time zones.
Same time as for GMT (Greenwich Mean Time)

SAST: South African Standard Time is UTC +2 hours.

Therefore the 10h15 UTC bulletin will be broadcasted in South Africa at 12h15.

Transmission on **4375 kHz, 8740 kHz, 13146 kHz** and on the following **VHF channels**:

Alexander Bay	04	Pearly Beach	85	Mazeppa Bay	28
Port Nolloth	01	Struisbaai	84	Port St Johns	24
Hondeklipbaai	25	Albertinia	86	Port Edward	27
Doringbaai	03	Knysna	23	Port Shepstone	26
Elandsbaai	23	Kareedouw	24	Bluff (Durban)	26
Saldanha Bay	27	Botha’s Hill	25	Richards Bay	28

Milnerton	25		Botha's Hill	27		Cape St Lucia	25
Constantiaberg	26		Governorskop	83		Sodwana	03
Hermanus	04		East London	26		Kosi Bay	01

Vessels with access to the internet can obtain updated weather forecast from the SAWS site at weathersa.co.za. Marine weather forecasts available on this site includes:

- Coastal Waters up to 50 nautical miles,
- High seas and
- Synoptic charts.

Weather forecast also available on NAVTEX.

NAVTEX 518 kHz F1B Medium Range – Navigational warnings & important information to ships.

Cape Town Radio, Port Elizabeth Radio and Durban Radio allocated transmission times.

Cape Town Radio	00h20	04h20	08h20	12h20	16h20	20h20 UTC
Port Elizabeth Radio	01h20	05h20	09h20	13h20	17h20	21h20
Durban Radio	02h20	06h20	10h20	14h20	18h20	22h20

Radio weather forecasts are also broadcast on Medium (MF) and High (HF) frequency selected channels. Refer to the available information concerning frequencies at the TELKOM MARITIME site and Section 3 – (Meteorological Services) RADIO SERVICES, of South African “*List of Lights and Radio Signals*” SAN HO-1 published by the SANHO and available from authorised suppliers.

4. Annual Notices to Mariners:

Attention is also drawn to the fact that the Annual Notices to Mariners, published by SANHO (available from SANHO website), provides supporting information regarding weather.

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