

CHANNEL TRAFFIC RULES

Generally the traffic in the Channel proceeds smoothly as most boaties observe the Rules and apply them with a large helping of common sense and courtesy.

This notice is intended to help the old hands brush up on their skills and as an introduction to new users, particularly those not used to sharing a narrow channel with a diverse selection of other boats.

The **RULES** are the same as for any channel in New Zealand. The most relevant parts ensure that we keep to the Starboard (right) side of the Channel and do not exceed 5 knots when passing another vessel or within 200 metres of the shore.

COMMON SENSE reminds us that a boat does not always go where it is pointing. At 5 knots boat speed with the tide running across the channel we will need to “aim off” more than 10 degrees just to keep on track. A fresh breeze going in the same direction as the tide will of course increase this effect, meaning that we will be crabbing sideways down the Channel. The leading marks at the Marina end are a great help in maintaining course and can also be used when leaving the Marina by glancing astern.

COURTESY will ensure that we make allowance for the difficulties of other Channel users. For instance, many yachties may not be aware just how difficult some launches are to steer at low speeds. Keeping to a minimum speed of 5 knots when practical is a big help.

Most keel yachts are constrained at low tide to very near the centreline of the Channel and therefore appreciate not being squeezed over to the side too much.

Remember that if a boat does touch the bottom it may stop dead. It is a good idea for following boats to leave a reasonable gap in order to avoid an unseemly coming together.

Yachts with engine problems can of course sail down the Channel to the Marina entrance so long as there is some wind and it is not from ahead. The tricky bit is actually stopping in a berth on arrival. A call to the Marina staff before entering the Channel either on VHF Channel 73 or mobile phone to 09 536 4720 will result in some friendly and welcome help.

If you are interested in doing a Boat Master course to increase your knowledge of safe boating, courses are available through Coastguard Boating Education. (www.cbes.org.nz/courses , phone 0800 40 80 90)