

TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS

CHAPTER 34--INLAND NAVIGATIONAL RULES

SUBCHAPTER I--RULES

Part D--Sound and Light Signals

Sec. 2032. Definitions (Rule 32)

- (a) The word ``whistle" means any sound signaling appliance capable of producing the prescribed blasts and which complies with specifications in Annex III to these Rules.
- (b) The term ``short blast" means a blast of about 1 second's duration.
- (c) The term ``prolonged blast" means a blast of from 4 to 6 seconds' duration.

(Pub. L. 96-591, Sec. 2, Dec. 24, 1980, 94 Stat. 3429.)

References in Text

Annex III to these Rules, referred to in par. (a), is to be established by the Secretary under section 2071 of this title.

Codification

Section was enacted as part of section 2 of Pub. L. 96-591 which enacted the Inland Navigational, Rules which comprise this subchapter.

[CITE: 33USC2033]

TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS

CHAPTER 34--INLAND NAVIGATIONAL RULES

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Part D--Sound and Light Signals

Sec. 2033. Equipment for sound signals (Rule 33)

(a) Vessels of 12 meters or more in length

A vessel of 12 meters or more in length shall be provided with a whistle and a bell and a vessel of 100 meters or more in length shall, in addition, be provided with a gong, the tone and sound of which cannot be confused with that of the bell. The whistle, bell and gong shall comply with the specifications in Annex III to these Rules. The bell or gong or both may be replaced by other equipment having the same respective sound characteristics, provided that manual sounding of the prescribed signals shall always be possible.

(b) Vessels of less than 12 meters in length

A vessel of less than 12 meters in length shall not be obliged to carry the sound signaling appliances prescribed in paragraph (a) of this Rule but if she does not, she shall be provided with some other means of making an efficient sound signal.

(Pub. L. 96-591, Sec. 2, Dec. 24, 1980, 94 Stat. 3430.)

**References in Text**

Annex III to these Rules, referred to in par. (a), is to be established by the Secretary under section 2071 of this title.

**Codification**

Section was enacted as part of section 2 of Pub. L. 96-591 which enacted the Inland Navigational Rules which comprise this subchapter.

[CITE: 33USC2034]

## TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS

### CHAPTER 34--INLAND NAVIGATIONAL RULES

#### SUBCHAPTER I--RULES

##### Part D--Sound and Light Signals

Sec. 2034. Maneuvering and warning signals (Rule 34)

(a) Whistle signals

When power-driven vessels are in sight of one another and meeting or crossing at a distance within half a mile of each other, each vessel underway, when maneuvering as authorized or required by these Rules:

- (i) shall indicate that maneuver by the following signals on her whistle: one short blast to mean "I intend to leave you on my port side"; two short blasts to mean "I intend to leave you on my starboard side"; and three short blasts to mean "I am operating astern propulsion".
- (ii) upon hearing the one or two blast signal of the other shall, if in agreement, sound the same whistle signal and take the steps necessary to effect a safe passing. If, however, from any cause, the vessel doubts the safety of the proposed maneuver, she shall sound the danger signal specified in paragraph (d) of this Rule and each vessel shall take appropriate precautionary action until a safe passing agreement is made.

(b) Light signals

A vessel may supplement the whistle signals prescribed in paragraph (a) of this Rule by light signals:

- (i) These signals shall have the following significance: one flash to mean "I intend to leave you on my port side"; two flashes to mean "I intend to leave you on my starboard side"; three flashes to mean "I am operating astern propulsion";
- (ii) The duration of each flash shall be about 1 second; and
- (iii) The light used for this signal shall, if fitted, be one all-round white or yellow light, visible at a minimum range of 2 miles, synchronized with the whistle, and shall comply with the provisions of Annex I to these Rules.

(c) Overtaking situations

When in sight of one another:

- (i) a power-driven vessel intending to overtake another power-driven vessel shall indicate her intention by the following signals on her whistle: one short blast to mean "I intend to overtake you on your starboard side"; two short blasts to mean "I intend to overtake you on your port side"; and
- (ii) the power-driven vessel about to be overtaken shall, if in agreement, sound a similar sound signal. If in doubt she shall sound the danger signal prescribed in paragraph (d).

(d) Doubts or failure to understand signals

When vessels in sight of one another are approaching each other and from any cause either vessel fails to understand the intentions or actions of the other, or is in doubt whether sufficient action is being taken by the other to avoid collision, the vessel in doubt shall immediately indicate such doubt by giving at least five short and rapid blasts on the whistle. This signal may be supplemented by a light signal of at least five short and rapid flashes.

(e) Vessels in areas of obscured visibility due to intervening obstructions

A vessel nearing a bend or an area of a channel or fairway where other vessels may be obscured by an intervening obstruction shall sound one prolonged blast. This signal shall be answered with a prolonged blast by any approaching vessel that may be within hearing around the bend or behind the intervening obstruction.

(f) Use of one whistle only on a vessel

If whistles are fitted on a vessel at a distance apart of more than 100 meters, one whistle only shall be used for giving maneuvering and warning signals.

(g) Power-driven vessels leaving dock or berth

When a power-driven vessel is leaving a dock or berth, she shall sound one prolonged blast.

(h) Agreement between vessels using radiotelephone

A vessel that reaches agreement with another vessel in a head-on, crossing, or overtaking situation, as for example, by using the radiotelephone as prescribed by the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act (85 Stat. 164; 33 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.), is not obliged to sound the whistle signals prescribed by this rule,<sup>1</sup> but may do so. If agreement is not reached, then whistle signals shall be exchanged in a timely manner and shall prevail.

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##### Part D--Sound and Light Signals

###### Sec. 2035. Sound signals in restricted visibility (Rule 35)

In or near an area of restricted visibility, whether by day or night, the signals prescribed in this Rule shall be used as follows:

(a) Power-driven vessels making way through the water

A power-driven vessel making way through the water shall sound at intervals of not more than 2 minutes one prolonged blast.

(b) Power-driven vessels underway but stopped and making no way through the water

A power-driven vessel underway but stopped and making no way through the water shall sound at intervals of not more than 2 minutes two prolonged blasts in succession with an interval of about 2 seconds between them.

(c) Vessels not under command; vessels restricted in ability to maneuver; sailing vessels; vessels engaged in fishing; vessels engaged in towing or pushing

A vessel not under command; a vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver, whether underway or at anchor; a sailing vessel; a vessel engaged in fishing, whether underway or at anchor; and a vessel engaged in towing or pushing another vessel shall, instead of the signals prescribed in paragraphs (a) or (b) of this Rule, sound at intervals of not more than 2 minutes, three blasts in succession; namely, one prolonged followed by two short blasts.

(d) Vessels towed

A vessel towed or if more than one vessel is towed the last vessel of the tow, if manned, shall at intervals of not more than 2 minutes sound four blasts in succession; namely, one prolonged followed by three short blasts. When practicable, this signal shall be made immediately after the signal made by the towing vessel.

(e) Pushing and pushed vessels connected in composite unit

When a pushing vessel and a vessel being pushed ahead are rigidly connected in a composite unit they shall be regarded as a power-driven vessel and shall give the signals prescribed in paragraphs (a) or (b) of this Rule.

(f) Vessels at anchor

A vessel at anchor shall at intervals of not more than 1 minute ring the bell rapidly for about 5 seconds. In a vessel of 100 meters or more in length the bell shall be sounded in the forepart of the vessel and immediately after the ringing of the bell the gong shall be sounded rapidly for about 5 seconds in the after part of the vessel. A vessel at anchor may in addition sound three blasts in succession; namely, one short, one prolonged and one short blast, to give warning of her position and of the possibility of collision to an approaching vessel.

(g) Vessels aground

A vessel aground shall give the bell signal and if required the gong signal prescribed in paragraph (f) of this Rule and shall, in addition, give three separate and distinct strokes on the bell immediately before and after the rapid ringing of the bell. A vessel aground may in addition sound an appropriate whistle signal.

(h) Vessels of less than 12 meters in length

A vessel of less than 12 meters in length shall not be obliged to give the above-mentioned signals but, if she does not, shall make some other efficient sound signal at intervals of not more than 2 minutes.

(i) Pilot vessels

A pilot vessel when engaged on pilotage duty may in addition to the signals prescribed in paragraphs (a), (b) or (f) of this Rule sound an identity signal consisting of four short blasts.

(j) Vessels anchored in special anchorage areas

The following vessels shall not be required to sound signals as prescribed in paragraph (f) of this Rule when anchored in a special anchorage area designated by the Secretary:

- (i) a vessel of less than 20 meters in length; and
- (ii) a barge, canal boat, scow, or other nondescript craft.

(Pub. L. 96-591, Sec. 2, Dec. 24, 1980, 94 Stat. 3431.)

Codification

Section was enacted as part of section 2 of Pub. L. 96-591 which enacted the Inland Navigational Rules which comprise this subchapter.

[CITE: 33USC2036]

TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS

CHAPTER 34--INLAND NAVIGATIONAL RULES

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Part D--Sound and Light Signals

Sec. 2036. Signals to attract attention (Rule 36)

If necessary to attract the attention of another vessel, any vessel may make light or sound signals that cannot be mistaken for any signal authorized elsewhere in these Rules, or may direct the beam of her searchlight in the direction of the danger, in such a way as not to embarrass any vessel.

(Pub. L. 96-591, Sec. 2, Dec. 24, 1980, 94 Stat. 3432.)

References in Text

These Rules, referred to in text, are the Inland Navigational Rules which are classified to this subchapter.

Codification

Section was enacted as part of section 2 of Pub. L. 96-591 which enacted the Inland Navigational Rules which comprise this subchapter.

Section Referred to in Other Sections

This section is referred to in section 2024 of this title.

[CITE: 33USC2037]

TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS

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Sec. 2037. Distress signals (Rule 37)

When a vessel is in distress and requires assistance she shall use or exhibit the signals described in Annex IV to these Rules.

(Pub. L. 96-591, Sec. 2, Dec. 24, 1980, 94 Stat. 3432.)

References in Text

Annex IV to these Rules, referred to in text, is to be established by the Secretary under section 2071 of this title.

Codification

Section was enacted as part of section 2 of Pub. L. 96-591 which enacted the Inland Navigational Rules which comprise this subchapter.

[CITE: 33USC2038]

TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS

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SUBCHAPTER I--RULES

Part E--Exemptions

Sec. 2038. Exemptions (Rule 38)

Any vessel or class of vessels, the keel of which is laid or which is at a corresponding stage of construction before December 24, 1980, provided that she complies with the requirements of—

- (a) Chapter 3 of this title for vessels navigating the waters subject to that chapter;
- (b) Chapter 5 of this title for vessels navigating the waters subject to that chapter;
- (c) Chapter 4 of this title for vessels navigating the waters subject to that chapter; or
- (d) Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the Act of April 25, 1940 (54 Stat.163), as amended (46 U.S.C. 526b, c, and d) for motorboats navigating the waters subject to that statute; shall be exempted from compliance with the technical Annexes to these Rules as follows:
  - (i) the installation of lights with ranges prescribed in Rule 22, until 4 years after the effective date of these Rules, except that vessels of less than 20 meters in length are permanently exempt;
  - (ii) the installation of lights with color specifications as prescribed in Annex I to these Rules, until 4 years after the effective date of these Rules, except that vessels of less than 20 meters in length are permanently exempt;
  - (iii) the repositioning of lights as a result of conversion to metric units and rounding off measurement figures, are permanently exempt; and
  - (iv) the horizontal repositioning of masthead lights prescribed by Annex I to these Rules:
    - (1) on vessels of less than 150 meters in length, permanent exemption.
    - (2) on vessels of 150 meters or more in length, until 9 years after the effective date of these Rules.
  - (v) the restructuring or repositioning of all lights to meet the prescriptions of Annex I these Rules, until 9 years after the effective date of these Rules;
  - (vi) power-driven vessels of 12 meters or more but less than 20 meters in length are permanently exempt from the provisions of Rule 23(a)(i) and 23(a)(iv) provided that, in place of these lights, the vessel exhibits a white light aft visible all round the horizon; and
  - (vii) the requirements for sound signal appliances prescribed in Annex III to these Rules, until 9 years after the effective date of these Rules.

(Pub. L. 96-591, Sec. 2, Dec. 24, 1980, 94 Stat. 3432.)

Repeal of Section

Pub. L. 108-293, title III, Sec. 303(a), (c), Aug. 9, 2004, 118 Stat. 1042, provided that this section is repealed effective on the effective date of final regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating under section 2071 of this title.

### References in Text

Chapter 3 of this title, referred to in par. (a), was in the original "The Act of June 7, 1897 (30 Stat. 96), as amended (33 U.S.C. 154-232)", which was repealed by section 8(a) of Pub. L. 96-591. Chapter 5 of this title, referred to in par. (b), was in the original "Section 4233 of the Revised Statutes (33 U.S.C. 301-356)", which was repealed by section 8(a) of Pub. L. 96-591. Chapter 4 of this title, referred to in par. (c), was in the original "The Act of February 8, 1895 (28 Stat. 645), as amended (33 U.S.C. 241-295)", which was repealed by section 8(b) of Pub. L. 96-591. Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the Act of April 25, 1940 (54 Stat. 163), as amended (46 U.S.C. 526b, c, and d), referred to in par. (d), were repealed effective 12 months after Dec. 24, 1980, by section 8(a) of Pub. L. 96-591. Annexes and Annexes I and III to these Rules, referred to in par. (d), are to be established by the Secretary under section 2071 of this title. Rule 22, referred to in par. (d)(i), is classified to section 2022 of this title. The effective date of these Rules, referred to in par. (d), is 12 months after Dec. 24, 1980, except on the Great Lakes, where the effective date was established as Mar. 1, 1983. See section 7 of Pub. L. 96-591, set out as an Effective Date note under section 2001 of this title. Rule 23, referred to in par. (d)(vi), is classified to section 2023 of this title.

### Codification

Section was enacted as part of section 2 of Pub. L. 96-591 which enacted the Inland Navigational Rules which comprise this subchapter.