



ESCA Statement on vessels operating in the vicinity of subsea cables

Masters of all vessels are reminded of their obligations per SOLAS* V Reg 34 to make a careful assessment of any proposed voyage taking into account all dangers to navigation, weather forecasts, tidal predictions and other relevant factors. Therefore, for any vessel whose planned activities involve physical interaction with the seabed (and some examples of such activities are given below in the reference to NP100), Masters should ensure that they have the latest available positional data for submarine cables.

Admiralty Charts and KIS-ORCA charts (www.KIS-ORCA.eu) are a good source of this data. KIS-ORCA charts are available freely online, are updated throughout the year and distributed freely annually. The cable data can be uploaded onto electronic charting systems and fish plotters. Masters as a matter of course should consult any Notice to Mariners/ Kingfisher Fortnightly Bulletins or other sources of notification relevant to their location and destination that have been issued, including those for any cable data.

If legally applicable, AIS must be operational at all times, it is illegal not have AIS operational if the vessel is legally required to have AIS.

Great effort is made to bury and protect subsea cables and in most cases subsea cables are buried, however, it is possible that sections of charted subsea cables may be exposed. therefore, For all activities:

“Never assume that cables are completely buried”

Cables are potentially subsea hazards and should be treated as such. NP 100 “The Mariners Handbook” advises that “Every care should be taken to avoid anchoring, trawling, fishing, dredging, drilling, or carrying out any other activity in the vicinity of cables which might damage them.” This warning is repeated on all admiralty charts as well.

Finally, when operating near a charted cable please be aware that to damage a cable either wilfully or through culpable negligence is an offence in UK and international law.

Due to the dependence of global internet connectivity and power generation/distribution on subsea cables this type of offence is being taken more and more seriously due to the scale of the effects being much greater than in the past. The result is that risk of prosecution with ever-increasing penalties or damage claims is increasing.

European Subsea Cables Association Executive Committee

* The international Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) is an international maritime treaty implemented by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), requiring Signatory flag states to ensure that ships flagged by them comply with minimum safety standards in construction, equipment and operation

