



## Prevention of Collision at Sea – Cleaning Up “Lights and Shapes”

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Let's finish up on the Lights and Shapes section of the Rules and be armed with the knowledge of what the merchant sea captain is saying to us...

### What Did We Say We Are Going to Focus On

We will focus on the primary commercial applications of the Rules:

**Rule 26:** Fishing Vessels - DONE

**Rule 27:** Vessels Not Under Command – NUCs – and Those Restricted In Their Ability to Maneuver – RAMs - DONE

**Rule 28:** Vessels Constrained by their Draft - THIS WEEK

**Rule 29:** Pilots – Who brings the leviathans into a crowded harbor? - THIS WEEK

**Rule 30:** Anchored and Aground - THIS WEEK

**Rule 31:** Seaplanes - THIS WEEK

### What Does Rule 28 Say?

Rule 28 is about the Shapes and Lights that a vessel “constrained by her draft” uses to proclaim that she is drawing pretty much all the water there is – so don't even think about her moving out of the channel for you. The Shape is a cylinder (think “beer

can”) and her Light, in addition to running lights consistent with her length, is 3 all-around red lights in a vertical row. And guess where there are no rights to proclaim you are “constrained by draft?” In the Inland waters...I guess that means we all are!

### What Does Rule 29 Say?

Rule 29 is about the Shapes and Lights that a vessel carrying a “pilot” uses to proclaim that she is involved in “pilotage.” First, there is no Shape. Her Light, in addition to running lights consistent with her length, is two lights in a vertical line near or at the masthead – white over red (the opposite of the Fishing Light “red over white, we be fishing tonight”). Her Sound, by the way, is 4 short blasts on the whistle – “Pilot aboard, Stand well clear.”

### What Does Rule 30 Say?

Rule 30 is about the Shapes and Lights that a vessel “at anchor” or “hard aground” uses to say “I'm staying right here...” With respect to a vessel hard aground, she really is “staying right here” because, unlike a vessel at anchor, she will not swing down wind when the wind shifts.

A vessel of 50 meters or greater and at anchor must display two white all-around lights – one in the forepart of the vessel and high enough so that it is well above the second all-around white light at the stern. In lieu of the fore light, she may display 1 “ball” as her Shape. If she is 100 meters or greater, she must also use her working lights to illuminate her decks between the anchor lights or shape and anchor light. Vessels less than 50 meters (that would be us...) need only use the 1 all-around light at the stern... Hence, our stern poles with the white all-around light...

If she is hard aground, in addition to the anchor lights described above, she must display two red lights in a vertical line (thus declaring herself a “NUC – Red over Red, the Captain is Dead!” see SSP, 3/12/08) or 3 balls in a line (“Balls! Balls! Balls! I'm stuck!”). The vessel less than 12 meters is not required to display her ignominy.

BTW, when is a vessel at anchor NOT required to display a Shape or Light in that regard? When she is in a special anchorage “designated by the Secretary.” Why? Everybody is at anchor!

### What Does Rule 31 Say?

Rule 31 is about the Shapes and Lights for a vessel that is in reality a seaplane (but afloat.) These “vessels” get a “pass” to a certain extent because they also have light requirements associated with their primary purpose – an aeronautical craft. So, she “shall exhibit Lights and Shapes as closely similar in characteristics and position as is possible.” Is it very hard to figure out that a seaplane is indeed a seaplane and not a boat...? I hope not... “WIGs” or hydrofoils are also subject to Rule 31.

### Summary

Well, we're closing in on the last of the Rules. I hope these columns have made them easier to understand and to understand the “whys and wherefores” too!

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux2008@aol.com or go direct to MaryJo Cruickshank, who is in charge of new members' matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you “get in this thing...”



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