

PILOTAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Pilotage Exemption between Ngan Chau Pilot Boarding Station and South Lamma Anchorages for Outbound Vessels

Background

According to the Pilotage Ordinance Cap. 84, a vessel is subject to compulsory pilotage when proceeding from the Ngan Chau Pilot Station to anchor at the South Lamma Anchorages (SLA). Under the Berthing Guidelines, a tug is required for any vessel berthing at the SLA. The purpose of the tug is to provide a lee for the pilot to safely disembark at the SLA as well as to swing the vessel if the anchorage is congested. Shipowners and agents are concerned of the tug requirement due to high cost implication.

Safety Considerations

2. Under the Ordinance, pilotage is not required if a vessel proceeds from Ngan Chau directly to sea. Furthermore, no pilotage and the associated tug requirement are needed for an inbound vessel to anchor at the SLA. This mode of operation has proven to be safe over the years.
3. The outbound passage and anchoring at the SLA is similar to the unpiloted trips mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Moreover, due to the falling occupancy rate, an outbound ship can safely anchor in the SLA using her own power.
4. On the other hand, the SLA is exposed to weather. Tug assistance is frequently required to create a lee from the anchored vessel for safe pilot disembarkation. In some extreme cases, pilots experience difficulties to disembark even with tug assistance.

Pilotage Exemption

5. Having regard to navigation safety of the passage and the additional financial burden to ship operators, the Marine Department will consider granting pilotage exemptions for outbound ships anchoring at the SLA from Ngan Chau Pilot Boarding Station on a case by case basis. Pilotage exemption will be granted when the SLA is not congested and the vessel can safely anchor there without tug assistance.

6. The master of the vessel shall apply in writing through the ship's agent to the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) for the exemption four hours before placing the pilot order. The VTC will evaluate the traffic density in the SLA and inform the vessel or her agent about the result of the application and copy to the HKPA.

Recommendation

7. This paper is for members' information on the pilotage exemption and its procedures.

Presentation

8. This paper will be presented by Mr. C. N. Chung of the Marine Department.

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