



The importance of ensuring navigation bridge visibility

Has your ship been exempted from complying with parts of the navigation bridge visibility requirements of SOLAS Regulation V/22 when carrying specialized cargoes such as wind turbine blades and towers? Beware that such exemption documents may not be accepted for compliance purposes in Australia.

Published 11 December 2024

In its [marine notice 14-2022](#), the Australian Maritime Safety Administration (AMSA) highlights the importance of ensuring navigation bridge visibility on all vessels sailing in Australian waters. It reminds vessel operators, masters and navigational officers of the requirements to:

- at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision (COLREG Rule 5), and
- ensure that appropriate navigation bridge visibility exists, with particular emphasis on the following SOLAS Regulation V/22 requirements:
 - *No blind sector caused by cargo, cargo gear or other obstructions outside of the wheelhouse forward of the beam which obstructs the view of the sea surface as seen from the conning position, shall exceed 10 degrees.*
 - *The view of the sea surface from the conning position shall not be obscured by more than two ship lengths, or 500 m, whichever is the less, forward of the bow to 10 degrees on either side under all conditions of draught, trim and deck cargo.*

While some flag states issue ‘dispensation documents’ allowing vessels to carry cargo up to the approximate level of the navigation bridge windows, Australia is of the view that SOLAS does not provide for such dispensations and that such documents may not be accepted for compliance purposes in Australia. If AMSA finds that the carriage of specialist cargo, such as wind turbine blades and towers, on a non-specialist vessel creates a clear danger to safe navigation as a result of impairment of bridge visibility, it may consider vessel detention and require the cargo to be offloaded.

Vessel owners, operators and masters are advised to take note of the above and ensure proper loading and stowage of all deck cargoes. Even if a vessel’s flag state has granted an exemption from the minimum bridge visibility requirements specified in SOLAS, Australia’s approval of cargo arrangements should be sought prior to entering its waters.