



The new Suez Canal due to open this week - update

The new Suez Canal which is due to open on 6 August 2015 will increase the capacity of the existing canal allowing ships to pass north and south concurrently. A new canal has been created, parallel to the existing one, to cope with the expected growth of world trade.

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Due to the lack of reliable navigational data prior to the opening of the new canal, Gard has recently received a number of enquiries from Members and clients about potential risks connected with the transit and navigation through the new Suez channel.

According to the Suez Canal Authority (SCA), the long term goal is to increase the daily average of transiting vessels to 97 ships by the year 2023, up from 49 ships at present, to achieve direct continuous transit for 45 ships in each direction. The 72 km project includes a new 35 km long parallel waterway, to a depth of 24 m and a width of 317 m at water level, so that the new channel can accommodate vessels with up to 66 feet draught. The project also includes deepening the current canal to 24 m and expansion of an existing 35 km stretch of the canal. The permissible draft will be 66 feet all through the canal. By allowing larger ships to transit in both directions waiting times will be minimised and the number of ships handled on a daily basis will increase. Transit times will be shortened from 18-22 hours to 11 hours and waiting times will be reduced from 8-11 hours to 3 hours at most. There will be a long section with two-way traffic and passing places will be built on other sections with one-way traffic. The two canals will be connected by four smaller waterways. Ships will continue to use the canal in convoys but the convoys will be much longer.

Members and clients transiting the new canal should note the following:

- According to the [SCA Navigation Circular no. 5/2015](#), the new Suez Canal has been equipped with navigational aids (buoys, bollard pulls and pilotage stations) and amended Suez Canal Rules of Navigation, August edition 2015 have been issued. Electronic charts for the new Suez Canal are available and charts of the Suez Canal cross section can be found [here](#). The pilotage system is as before. The circular also describes the new traffic system.
- According to the SCA no vessel will be allowed to pass through the waterway unless the Canal is secure. The first cargo ship successfully passed through in a test-run last week. Members and clients should monitor the [SCA website](#) prior to transit.

According to the type: asset-hyperlink id: 41f0d39787024065accdd8a63f3b540 received from the SCA dated 13 July 2015, Masters of vessels transiting the Suez Canal are requested to submit a signed and stamped letter of undertaking, confirming that there are no weapons on board. The letter must be submitted prior to transit, otherwise the vessel will not be allowed to enter the Canal.

Gard will monitor the situation and provide further information when available.

We would like to thank El Hamamsy Marine Services Ltd in Egypt for this information