

## Insight Article

# IMO adopts new ship routing measures in the vicinity of the Aleutian Island archipelago

The Maritime Safety Commission of the IMO has adopted new vessel routing measures aimed at reducing the risk of marine casualties and related pollution from large vessels operating in the vicinity of Alaska's Aleutian Island archipelago.

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The measures designate five Areas To Be Avoided (ATBAs) in the Aleutian Island region, which essentially create a buffer extending approximately 50 miles from the shoreline. The routing measures will apply to vessels of 400 gross tons or more on international voyages transiting the Great Circle Route and will enter into force on 1 January 2016.

The ATBAs were created as part of a comprehensive regional risk assessment undertaken after the 2004 grounding of the M/V SELENDANG AYU, a bulk carrier driven aground near Unalaska Island by a winter storm after she suffered an engine failure in the Bering Sea. The SELENDANG AYU ultimately broke in half, discharging nearly 350,000 gallons of bunker and diesel fuel into the ocean. Six crew members were tragically lost during a rescue attempt by the United States Coast Guard.

Although most vessels maintain a safe distance from the coast, some have been observed in close proximity to the shoreline. The buffer is intended to add valuable time for emergency repairs or response efforts to assist a distressed vessel, and to decrease the chances of grounding due to negligent navigation and/or adverse weather conditions. The routing measures aims to minimise course alterations due to the presence of the ATBAs and generally allow vessels to follow existing traffic patterns, including use of the Unimak Pass fairway.

The new routing measures acknowledge the highly variable weather conditions, remoteness, sparse infrastructure, and limited response capabilities that are characteristic of the Aleutian Islands region. Many of the vessels transiting the region do so in innocent passage, and are not subject to United States or Alaska oil spill prevention and response requirements. Further details regarding the new vessel routing measures can be found [NSR.jpg](#) .

*We would like to thank Keesal, Young & Logan, San Francisco for this information.*

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