

Puget Sound Sailboat Safety Regulations

2002 Revision

As adopted by the Shilshole Bay, Sloop Tavern, Corinthian, and Seattle Yacht Clubs

We must share Puget Sound with its commercial traffic, including many deep-water vessels and tows. It is sobering to note that, if your boat is one mile dead-ahead of a freighter coming down the Sound at normal speed, and the freighter's helm is put hard over to avoid you, the freighter's bow will miss you, but her stern will not! Obviously, this implies that early and decisive action is required to keep your boat out of the path of a large oncoming vessel or tow.

1. Yachts must not sail across a tow line, too close ahead, or too close alongside of commercial traffic. Deep water vessels have limited ability to change course and speed. Barges under tow can yaw unexpectedly well out to the side at speeds essentially the same as they are being towed. Yachts should not pass less than one mile ahead and 1/4 mile to the side of large vessels.
2. Rule 10 of the International and Inland Rules to Prevent Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) requires that no power-driven vessel less than 20 meters (66 feet) in length, and no sailing vessel (of any size) may impede the safe passage of a power-driven vessel following a Vessel Traffic System (VTS) Lane.
3. Rule 9 of the COLREGS requires that no power vessel of less than 20 meters (66 feet) in length and no sailing vessel (of any length) shall impede the safe passage of any vessel which can navigate only within a narrow channel or fairway. Puget Sound can be considered a "narrow channel" for most large commercial traffic. "Impede" means to cause to alter speed or course or to take evasive action.
4. A yacht in position where it may impede commercial traffic must exit from the "danger area" immediately, under auxiliary power if necessary. If power is used, it must be reported to the Race Committee at the finish line. Also, a written report must be made on a protest form, showing the location, time, duration of power use, speed, direction of exit, and that the competitive position of the yacht was not improved. If the last item cannot be demonstrated adequately, a time penalty may be imposed.
5. Radar reflectors must be flown at all times when racing. They must meet IMO recommendations (i.e., of metal plates of sufficient rigidity to maintain a 90 degree angle), be not less than 12 1/2 inches in diameter, and be installed not less than 4 meters (13 ft.) above the water. See PIYA Special Regulations paragraph 3.8.
6. Navigation lights must be shown between sunset and sunrise as required by the International Rules of the Road.
7. Observed and/or reported violations of the safety regulations may be protested. The Race Committee shall have the option of issuing a "warning" when deemed appropriate. Warnings are recorded and may be considered when judging any future reports.