

## Historical background on ships' routing

The 1960 SOLAS Convention referred to ships' routing measures in busy areas on both sides of the North Atlantic and Contracting Governments undertook the responsibility of using their influence to induce the owners of all ships crossing the Atlantic to follow the recognized routes and to ensure adherence to such routes in converging areas by all ships, so far as circumstances permitted.

Meanwhile, analysis of casualty statistics was showing that collisions between ships were becoming a worrying cause of accidents, especially in congested waterways.

In 1963, the Liverpool Underwriters Association reported 21 collisions responsible for total losses of ships - compared with a five-year average of 13.8. A report on tanker hazards presented to the United States Treasury presented late in 1963 concluded that most accidents were due to human error, with speed in congested waters a principal cause. The report said there too many diverse "rules of the road", the width of navigable channels had generally not kept pace with the increase in sizes of ships, and not enough was being done to use modern communications.

At the same time, the institutes of Navigation of the Federal Republic of Germany, France and the United Kingdom had begun a study on improving safety measures in congested areas, such as the English Channel. The group came up with a series of proposals, including the idea that ships using congested areas should follow a system of one-way traffic schemes, like those being used on land. Traffic lanes of this type were already in use on the Great Lakes of North America.

The proposals were favourably received by the Maritime Safety Committee of IMO (then IMCO) in 1964 and governments were urged to advise their ships to follow the routes suggested by the group.

### 1967 - Dover Straits TSS established

The Institutes in 1966 published a report proposing traffic separation schemes in a number of areas, and in June 1967 a traffic separation scheme was established in the Dover Straits - the world's first - and a significant fall was seen in the number of collisions between ships on opposing courses.

At the time, observance of the schemes was voluntary, but in 1971 a series of accidents in the English Channel led to calls for immediate action - in the most serious incidents, the tanker Texaco Caribbean was in collision with a freighter off the Varne shoals and the following night the wreck was struck by the freighter Brandenburg, which also sank. Some six weeks later, the freighter Niki struck the wreckage and sank with the loss of all 21 people on board.

As a result, IMO's Maritime Safety Committee meeting in March 1971 recommended that observance of all traffic separation schemes be made mandatory and this recommendation was adopted by the IMO Assembly later the same year. The Dover Straits scheme was therefore the first mandatory traffic scheme, from 1971.

The Conference which adopted the Collision Regulations (COLREGs), in 1972 also made observance of traffic separation schemes mandatory.

Since then, numerous ships routing systems have been adopted and they can be found in the publication, Ships Routing.