



Sail together!
On Dutch inland waterways



The most important right-of-way rules on inland waterways

- Small vessels (up to 20 metres long) always give right of way to large vessels (longer than 20 metres) because small vessels can manoeuvre more easily and can stop more quickly.
- Ferry boats, passenger ships, tugboats and fishing boats that are in operation always have the same rights as do large vessels, even if they are shorter than 20 metres.
- A vessel that wants to enter the main waterway must yield to a vessel in the buoyed channel on starboard side. There is an exception to this: a vessel that enters from a buoyed secondary waterway. In this situation, a small vessel on the main waterway must yield to a large vessel coming from the buoyed secondary channel.
- A small motorboat (up to 20 metres) must yield to a small sailboat (up to 20 metres) or a rowboat if their courses cross and neither of the vessels is on starboard. A large motorboat or a large sailboat yields to the ship approaching from starboard side.
- A small sailboat tacking to port has right of way over a small sailboat tacking to starboard. If both vessels are tacking to the same side, the windward vessel must yield to the leeward vessel.
- Vessels entering or crossing a main waterway from a harbour or a secondary waterway may not obstruct other vessels. The sign B.9 means that vessels on the main waterway always have right of way.
- There is an additional rule on the Waal, Neder-Rijn, Lek and the Pannerdensch Kanaal. If a descending vessel wants to turn to, for example, enter a harbour, this vessel must yield to an ascending vessel trying to reach the harbour. A descending vessel sails with the current, and an ascending vessel sails against the current.

Regulations

The BPR (Inland Waterways Police Regulations) apply to all waterways in the Netherlands that are open to navigation. This includes the IJsselmeergebied, the Wadden Sea, the Zeeuwse and Zuid-Hollandse Stromen, the Geldersche IJssel and the Maas. There are some exceptions where other regulations apply:

- Boven-Rijn, Waal, Pannerdensch kanaal, Neder-Rijn and Lek: Rhine Navigation Police Regulations (RPR).
- Westerschelde: Westerschelde Navigation Regulations.
- Gent-Terneuzen Canal: Gent-Terneuzen Canal Navigation Regulations.
- Dollard en Eems: Eemsmonding Navigation Regulations.
- De Grensmaas: Gemeenschappelijke Maas Navigation Regulations.

The navigation regulations in the Netherlands:

- The Inland Waterways Police Regulations
- The Rhine Navigation Police Regulations
- Westerschelde Navigation Regulations
- Gent-Terneuzen Canal Navigation Regulations
- Eems-Dollard Navigation Regulations
- Gemeenschappelijke Maas Navigation Regulations





Make sailing enjoyable!

Sailing is freedom. Away from the shore. You can fully enjoy being on the water in the Netherlands with all its many forms of water sports. But the waterways can be busy since they are used by both commercial and recreational vessels. Rules have been made to ensure safety on the water, and each captain must know these rules. The rules can be found in the Inland Waterways Police Regulations (BPR) and have been bundled in the ANWB's Water Almanac 1. They can also be downloaded as an app.

The project 'SafeBoating.eu' promotes a safe, cooperative use of the waterways by commercial and recreational vessels. There are ten 'Knooppuntenboekjes', which describe the most important waterway junctions in each region and contain maps showing you the safest and fastest way to navigate in these junctions. You can download these booklets for free on www.safeboating.eu / www.varendoejesamen.nl you can also download the app with these junctions.

This brochure contains the most important navigation rules, some advice and a number of practical tips for safe sailing. If you prepare yourself for your trip, you'll enjoy yourself much more! This brochure was created together with the Covenant partners of the 'Varen doe je samen!' project and for the European funded INTERREG IVB project as www.safeboating.eu

Good seamanship

Safe sailing begins on shore with good preparations.

- Make sure that you know the navigation rules and the meanings of the signs. All of the signs can be found in Appendix 7 of the BPR.
- Always listen to the weather forecast so you won't be taken by surprise when you're on the water.
- Know where you're sailing: use the most recent navigation maps for your area.
- Your vessel must be ready to sail: full tanks and batteries, clean fuel tanks and filters.
- The regulations, for example the Almanac 1, must be on board a small vessel (except for small open vessels).

'Good seamanship' is a basic rule of the BPR. In short, it means that a skipper avoids damage, does not endanger lives and does not obstruct fast and safe sailing. Good seamanship begins with good preparations for your voyage.

On the water

Starboard

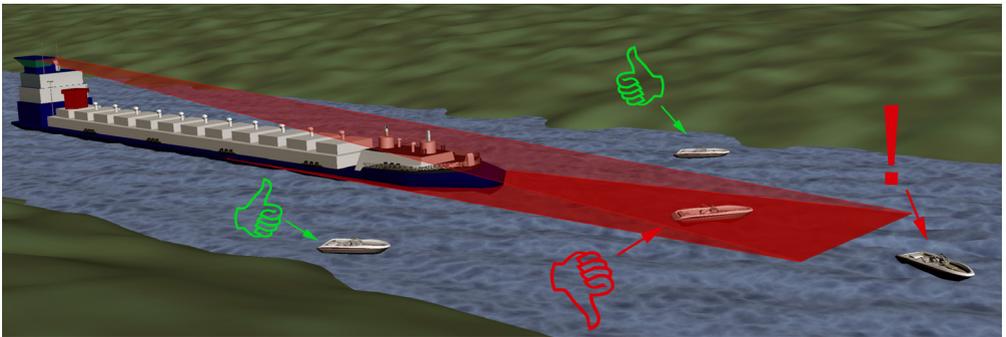
Keep to starboard (on the right) as much as possible when sailing, even when you are in the buoyed water channel. In some cases, large vessels may sail on port side (on the left). For example, to avoid a strong current or to enter a harbour. Large vessels sailing on port side display a blue sign with a flashing white light to oncoming vessels. This means overtake starboard to starboard. For details, see the BPR and download the folder 'Het blauwe bord' on www.varendoesamen.nl

Course and speed

Always travel in a clear course so that other skippers understand what you plan to do. Adjust your course and speed if you give right-of-way to another ship and give each other the room to manoeuvre. Make sure that your boat does not make large waves or cause suction that could lead to danger and damage. On large waterways, rivers and channels with heavy commercial traffic, a small boat must be able to travel at least 6 km an hour using its engine.

Stay out of the blind area!

Don't go too closely in front of (large) vessels because of the blind area from the cabin. This blind area can be as long as 350 metres. If you sail within this distance in front of another vessel, the vessel's captain can't see you. A freighter has a blind area, the area at the front that the captain can't see.

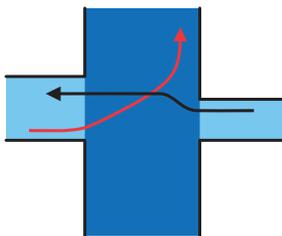


Stay out of the blind area! The length of the blind area depends on the type of ship, the cargo, the height of the cabin and the distance from the cabin to the end of the visual obstacle. The blind area of an inland waterway vessel can be as long as 350 metres. A rule of thumb: if you can't see the cabin on a freighter, the captain can't see you. Look behind you regularly and make sure that you have an unobstructed view when steering. This is described in BPR Article 1.09, point 3. The situation described there is for inland waterways; the blind area of freighters at sea can be much larger!

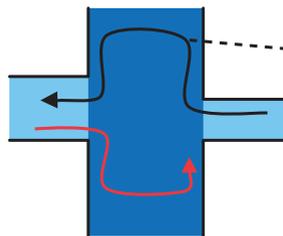




Cross safely



NOT LIKE THIS!



BUT LIKE THIS!

Good view?
Is it safe
to cross?

 the channel
 the transecting waterway

Imagine: You are leaving a transecting waterway and want to sail on port side on a busy waterway. Don't simply cross the busy junction on backboard side, but first turn right with perhaps a lookout on the forecastle. You first briefly sail on starboard. Only when you have a clear view and know that it is safe, cross the channel at a right angle. Then navigate again on starboard side in your chosen direction and safely cross the channel. Do this at moderate speed so that you can stop if necessary. A commercial vessel is faster than you think.

A wide berth

If you want to go into a harbour, you should set a wide course by taking a wide curve so that you don't hinder other vessels. This will give you a better view since you can look into the harbour. In addition, vessels leaving the harbour will be able to see you earlier.

Well-prepared for your trip

Insurance for recreational craft

With insurance for recreational craft you are insured against liability for damage caused by your boat and for damage from external calamities such as fire and theft. If you sail without insurance, the liability for damage can have major consequences.

Certificate of competence

In the Netherlands you need an International Certificate of Competence for:

- A vessel between 15 and 25 metres long that is not used for commercial purposes.
- A vessel between 15 and 20 metres long that is intended for commercial use or is used commercially.
- A tugboat used to tow or push a ship with a maximum length of 20 metres.
- A water scooter, jet ski, rubber boat or motorboat shorter than 15 metres that can sail faster than 20 km an hour at full throttle.

There are two levels of certificates

International Certificate of Competence I (VBI) - To sail on rivers, channels and lakes including the Gouwee and Randmeren. But not on: the Westerschelde, Oosterschelde, IJsselmeer, Markermeer, IJmeer, Wadden Sea, Eems and Dollard.

International Certificate of Competence II (VB2) - To sail on all inland waterways including the Westerschelde, Oosterschelde, IJsselmeer, Markermeer, IJmeer, Wadden Sea, Eems and Dollard.

No certificate is needed to sail on the North Sea but a certificate is needed for the ports.

No obligation, but there is an exam

Getting a certificate of competence is useful even if your ship does not require one. Then you have enough basic knowledge of the regulations, laws and safety measures and this enhances safety.

Water sports courses

You can brush up your knowledge via numerous water sports courses, such as 'Planning a trip', 'Theoretical coastal navigation', 'Manoeuvring by engine' or 'Sailing in the Wadden Sea'. In the Netherlands most of these water sports courses for both sailboats and motorboats follow the diploma system of the Commissie Watersport Opleidingen (CWO). More information can be found on www.cwo.nl

Ready to sail safely

Your boat must, of course, be ready to sail and technically in order. Be sure that your engine works well, that your batteries are full and that your fuel tank is full. Clean fuel tanks and fuel filters decrease the chance of engine trouble caused by dirt or water in the fuel system. About 60% of the rescue activities done by the Koninklijke Nederlandse Redding Maatschappij (KNRM) are connected to water sports. There are a number of patterns involved, such as engine problems being the cause of the need for help. For more information about preventing engine problems, go to www.knrm.nl





Attention for the engine

Empty batteries, clogged filters and dirty fuel tanks often cause engine problems, especially at the beginning of the sailing season. Bacterial growth in a diesel tank during the winter is a problem. Here are some handy tips:

- Clean your tank before the sailing season begins.
- Make sure your filters are clean.
- Bleed the engine after changing the filters.
- Regularly check the oil level of the engine.
- Charge the batteries.
- Sail with a full tank.
- Check the coolant too! Dirt in the fuel supply or a defective impeller can cause the engine to overheat.
- Have tools and the usual spare parts on board.
- Follow a course on diesel engines. In just one day you can learn how to change filters and impellers, change the oil and get the engine ready for winter.

Engine trouble

If your engine dies while you are sailing on an inland waterway, try to drop anchor or - if possible - to moor your boat to prevent a collision. Warn a traffic station, stay on the lookout and let other vessels know that you can't manoeuvre by, for example, sounding your horn. You cannot drop anchor in a busy waterway such as the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal.

Good equipment on board enhances your safety. Examples:

- Safety equipment. Lifejackets and life rings at hand, a fire extinguisher, first-aid kit, emergency flares, radar reflector and an anchor.
 - Navigation equipment. Maps, a compass, etc. in order to always be able to chart your position.
 - Communication equipment to receive messages from traffic stations and other ships as well as weather forecasts.
- Safety is a question of thinking ahead and taking the necessary measures. Your boat must be suitable for the water on which you're sailing. It should be clear that an open rowboat with an outboard engine should not cross a large, open body of water such as the IJsselmeer.

The passengers must also be 'ready to sail'. It is wise to have two people on board who can sail the vessel. Think of what to do if the captain can no longer sail.

Wear a lifejacket

When on the water, wear a lifejacket even if you can swim well. There is always the danger of falling overboard and of hypothermia. With a lifejacket on, you will float on your back within seconds and the collar supports your head. A lifejacket can save your life. The KNRM strongly advises you to wear a good-fitting lifejacket that is correctly fastened and suitable for the conditions on board. For more information, see www.knrm.nl

Sailors on large bodies of open water and at sea are advised to wear a lifeline.

Blood alcohol level

The blood alcohol level permitted for captains is 0.5 percent and applies to all skippers steering a ship. Everyone who drives a boat must be sharp and alert.

Communication on the water

VHF radio telephone

The radio telephone, a transceiver for maritime communication, is essential for commercial vessels. Captains, traffic supervisors, bridge men and lock keepers communicate with one another via the radio telephone. The radio telephone is not required equipment for small vessels, but it is strongly advised to have one on board, particularly on waterways also used by commercial vessels. Without a radio telephone, you will miss a great amount of information and contact with other vessels and traffic supervisors, which can lead to dangerous situations. In addition, you will not be able to warn others in case of an emergency.

Duty to listen

If you have a radio telephone on board, you must have a certificate of operation and you also have the duty to listen to the broadcasts: you must use the radio telephone. It is useful to practice speaking via the radio telephone so that you won't be taken by surprise.

Traffic supervision and block channels

Traffic stations supervise navigation on busy waterways, such as the waterway from Hoek van Holland to Dordrecht, the Westerschelde and the major rivers. The section of waterway supervised by a traffic station is called a block area. Each traffic station and thus each block area has its own radio telephone channel. This channel is posted on navigation maps and on signs along the shores. When you sail into such a block area, you are required to listen to that block channel.

Channels 10 and 13

Beyond the heavily travelled supervised areas, in other words beyond the block areas, all vessels set their radio telephones to channel 10, the general nautical channel for inland waterways. As a result, all captains can make and receive calls. When at sea, all ships set the radio telephone to channel 13.

Sounding an alarm

If you find yourself in an emergency, you can sound an alarm.

- Channel 10. Use channel 10 on inland waterways.
- Block channel. Use the block channel in a supervised block area.
- Channel 16. At sea and on large inland bodies of water (Wadden Sea, IJsselmeer, Oosterschelde and Westerschelde), the Coast Guard will communicate with you on this channel.

Regulations for traffic supervision

There are basic rules for radio telephone communication in the block areas.

- The skipper is always responsible for safe navigation.
- When sailing in a block area, you are required to listen to that area's channel. This also applies to small vessels with a radio telephone.
- Certain sorts of vessels (vessels carrying hazardous cargo, special transport vessels and some passenger vessels) must report when entering a radio telephone area.
- All vessels except small ones must report to the radio telephone block channel when:
 - entering and leaving a harbour or secondary waterway
 - turning on a waterway
 - crossing a waterway
- Nautical traffic communication among ships and with the traffic stations must be done via the radio telephone block channel.
- Keep all communication short and to the point. Report the name and type of ship, your position and the direction you are travelling in.

Audio signals

When on the water, you can use the ship's horn to signal.

The signals are listed in Article 4.02 and appendix 6 of the BPR. Some of these audio signals are:

Attention:	a long blast	-
Starboard straight on:	a short blast	.
Port straight on:	two short blasts	..
Reversing:	three short blasts	...
Unable to manoeuvre:	four short blasts
Danger of collision:	a series of short blasts
Request for bridge:	long short long	-.-

Very short blast = a quarter of a second

- Short blast = 1 second
- Long blast = 4 seconds



Bridges and locks

Passing through a lock

Passing through a lock demands extra attention. Since both commercial vessels and pleasure craft have limited room to move in a lock, they must communicate with one another and with the lock keeper. Be considerate of one another so that all vessels can pass quickly and safely. Do not try to push ahead, but rather wait your turn and follow the lock keeper's instructions.

Safe passage through locks and under bridges

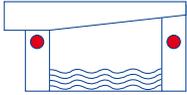
- Don't make excessive waves while waiting.
- Wait in front of the red light. Don't enter or leave a lock until permitted.
- Listen to the appropriate radio telephone channel.
- Enter the lock only when it is your turn. Don't push ahead. This also applies to mooring your ship while waiting.
- A small boat must yield to a large ship if possible.
- When in a lock, small vessels should keep their distance from larger vessels.
- Anchor your boat with enough mooring ropes and loosen them on time when the water level goes down. Make sure that they don't get stuck.
- Ropes secured? Propeller off!
- Don't keep circling in front of a bridge; sail under the bridge quickly when it opens so that you don't hinder road traffic.
- Always use the correct section of the bridge and be aware of oncoming vessels, especially commercial vessels.

Almost all bridges and locks have light signals. Detailed information about what these lights indicate can be found in the BPR.

Bridges in operation

Red lights always mean that passage is prohibited unless an extra yellow or green light is also on. In that case, you may sail further.

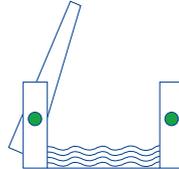
Use the horn signal long-short-long to request bridge assistance: — • —



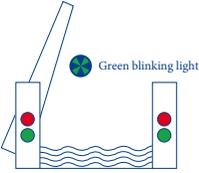
Passage prohibited



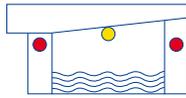
Passage prohibited, will be allowed straight away



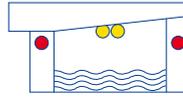
Passage allowed



Passage prohibited unless the vessel is so close to the opening that it is almost impossible to come to a halt



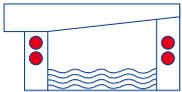
Passage under closed bridge allowed; there may be oncoming vessels



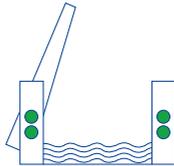
Passage under a closed bridge is allowed but not for oncoming vessels

Bridges not in operation

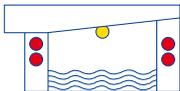
Double red lights always mean that the bridge is not in operation and that passage is prohibited unless there is an extra yellow or green light. In that case, you may sail further.



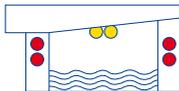
Bridge is not in operation; passage is prohibited.



Passage is allowed, bridge is unattended, there may be oncoming vessels!



Passage under closed bridge allowed; there may be oncoming vessels.



Passage under a closed bridge is allowed but not for oncoming vessels.



What you should also know . . .

All information about waterways on just one site

All of the information about the availability of waterways has been bundled on www.vaarweginformatie.nl

There is also more information. You can subscribe for free to get specific updates and information for each navigation area. The website can also be accessed via your cell phone or tablet.

Transport of hazardous materials

Inland vessels carrying hazardous material (flammable, poisonous or explosive) display one, two or three blue signs or lights. Vessels with hazardous material travelling to sea display a red flag or red light. Keep your distance from these ships and do not use any flames if near them.

Fog and radar

The BPR lists waterways and harbours where you may not sail in poor visibility without officially approved radar equipment. If you have no radar and visibility is poor in those areas, you must find the nearest mooring place; otherwise, you risk a fine. Both if visibility is poor and at night, a small vessel or a vessel at anchor on busy waterways must have a radar reflector. In addition to the customary radar reflectors, 'active' sorts are available that strengthen the signals of ships with radar.

At night or when visibility is poor, you can contact the appropriate traffic station to ask for supervision. If as skipper of a recreational vessel, you don't trust the sky, you should stay in the harbour.

Route for ships with fixed masts

This is a safe route of passage for sailboats and motorboats with a mast higher than 6 metres. It is, for example, an alternative for a sea voyage. This route is used by both pleasure craft and commercial vessels. You will frequently pass busy waterway junctions. The 'Fixed Mast Route' brochure published by Rijkswaterstaat (the Department of Waterways) contains practical information needed to prepare your trip and for an unobstructed and safe trip. You can request this brochure from Rijkswaterstaat or the Watersportverbond or you can download it at www.rijkswaterstaat.nl or www.varendoejesamen.nl

Swimming is not always allowed

There are regulations for swimming in rivers. Article 8.08 of the BPR 'Watersports zonder schip' states:

1. A person who is swimming ... must keep his or her distance from a sailing ship or a sailing, floating object . . .
2. Swimming, water sports without a boat and underwater sports are prohibited:
 - At a waiting area or near a bridge, lock or floodgate.
 - In sections of the waterway meant for on-going vessels.
 - In ferry boats routes.
 - In harbours and near harbour entrances.
 - Near mooring areas.
 - In areas where fast motorboats and waterskiing is allowed.
 - In the areas set off by official authorities.
3. Official authorities can make exemptions for the second paragraph of this Article.

Waves, suction and currents can be dangerous for swimmers. This is also true of low water temperatures. Swimming near bridges, locks and floodgates is prohibited, so you may never dive from a bridge, lock or floodgate. This also applies to jetties, quays and dolphins. Besides, it is extremely dangerous!

Suitable swimming locations can be found on www.zwemwater.nl

Water supervisors inspect the water quality at official swimming locations.

Courtesy

A survey taken among members of the Nederlands Platform voor Waterrecreatie (NPvW) showed that the behaviour of some water sports lovers is a source of irritation. To avoid the need for stricter laws and regulations, a 'code of behaviour' for water sports enthusiasts has been created. This code, which can be found on www.npvw.nl, contains the following guidelines:

- Offer help in an emergency.
- Don't make any unnecessary noise; sounds travel far on the water.
- Allow other vessels to come next to you (preferably bow and stern in reversed order); walk over your neighbour's foredeck to reach the shore.
- Help other boats with their ropes when mooring.
- Adjust your speed to the conditions on the waterway. If your stern wave is too high, it can be both irritating and damaging.
- Display correct flags. Lower your national flag at sunset.
- Don't throw waste overboard and don't discharge any wastewater or bilge water.
- Don't disturb any animals in nature reserves and don't enter any resting or breeding areas.



Fast boating

Fast boating is going faster than 20 kilometres an hour. A fast motorboat is a boat shorter than 20 metres that can sail faster than 20 kilometres an hour. This also includes personal water crafts. The national maximum speed limit for fast motorboats on the water is 20 kilometres an hour unless otherwise indicated by traffic signs on the shore and on official navigation maps. On most Dutch waterways, the maximum speed is between 6 and 9 km an hour. Beyond the areas indicated for fast boats, boating fast is dangerous for other water sports lovers and the environment.

The minimum age for driving a boat:

- Fast motorboat: 18 years old
- Motorboat, large boat and sailboat longer than 7 metres: 16 years old
- Open motorboat that can't go faster than 13 km an hour and is shorter than 7 metres: 12 years old
- Sailboats shorter than 7 metres and small rowboats: no minimum age

Please note: An adult in a small rubber boat with 4 hp will probably not reach 20 km an hour but a child in that same boat may well reach this speed. In that case, your child may not go with you.

Waterskiing or wake boarding is allowed only in designated areas. In addition to the skipper of the boat, there must be a second person on board who is at least 15 years old and who constantly watches the immediate surroundings plus the water-skier or wake-boarder. Waterskiing may not lead to dangerous situations or irritation to others. The same rules for sailing with a fast boat apply to waterskiing.

The skipper of a fast motorboat must avoid annoying or endangering others. Fast boats must (considerably) adjust their speed in the following areas:

- Within 20 metres from shore unless signs indicate otherwise.
- Within 50 metres of a swimming area or mooring area.
- Near matches, water parties, demonstrations and similar events.
- If visibility is less than 500 metres (for example, fog or rain).
- In a harbour.
- At night (unless there is an official exemption).
- Within 100 metres of a harbour entrance.
- Near ferry boats.

Enforcing the rules

Waterway supervisors such as Rijkswaterstaat and the police enforce the rules on the larger national waterways. On regional and local waterways this is done by the provinces, water boards and the regional police. They pay special attention to boating behaviour, certificates and the use of alcohol. Special investigators are authorised to hand out fines.



Foto: Dik van Veldhuizen

In short: 10 tips for recreational craft

1. Prepare your trip. Take updated navigation maps with you on board. Listen to the weather forecasts and, if not necessary, don't sail if there is poor visibility or it is dark.
2. See and be seen. Make sure that you are always visible. And that you can comfortably look all around you. Look back regularly so that you can see approaching vessels on time. You should be able to hear horn signals well.
3. Check your engine. Sail with clean, full tanks, clean fuel filters and fully charged batteries. On a number of larger waterways and rivers (listed in the BPR Appendix 5), a small boat must have an engine and must be able to maintain a speed of at least 6 km an hour with regard to the water.
4. Yield to commercial vessels. Keep as much as possible on the right side of the waterway and stay away from commercial vessels.
5. If a ship is displaying a blue sign with a white, blinking light, try to pass on the side of the blue sign if traffic permits this.
6. Steer a clear course to help other captains to understand what you are doing.
7. Stay out of the blind area
8. Be aware of fast vessels. At some locations, motorboats are allowed to sail faster than 20 km an hour.
9. Reduce speed on time so that other ships are not hindered by the waves from your bow or stern.
10. Use the radio telephone. Listen to messages and use it to avoid unclear and dangerous situations.

Colophon

De folder is een uitgave van Varen doe je samen!

Deelnemende partijen aan het project zijn Rijkswaterstaat, alle provincies, Haven Amsterdam, Havenbedrijf Rotterdam NV en Groningen Seaports, HISWA Vereniging, Watersportverbond, Koninklijke Schuttevaer, ANWB en de Stichting Recreatietoervaart Nederland (SRN).

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Het auteursrecht ligt bij de Convenantpartners die bij het project Varen doe je samen! betrokken zijn. Overname van de inhoud is uitsluitend toegestaan na schriftelijke toestemming van de Stichting Recreatietoervaart Nederland. www.srn.nl

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Questions? Go to www.safeboating.eu and www.varendoejesamen.nl

