



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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U.S. Coast Guard
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Use of Personal Electronic Devices While Piloting Commercial Vessels

This Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) is being issued to highlight the significant safety risks associated with the use of Personal Electronic Devices (PEDs) while operating commercial vessels and to reinforce the need for strict adherence to safe operating procedures and applicable regulations.

Sector Ohio Valley has observed a concerning trend of pilots and operators of commercial vessels engaging in streaming activities (e.g, live video broadcasts) and active social media use while on duty. This behavior raises serious concerns about the potential for distraction, reduced situational awareness, and compromised safety.

The use of PEDs while operating a commercial vessel can lead to the following hazardous conditions:

Distraction: Talking, texting, emailing, browsing the internet, or actively engaging in live stream interactions on a PED diverts attention from the immediate operating environment, increasing the risk of collisions, groundings, and other marine casualties.

Reduced Situational Awareness: PED use can impair an operator's ability to monitor radar, AIS, visual aids to navigation, and radio communications, leading to a delayed or missed response to developing hazards.

Delayed Reaction Time: Texting and other forms of PED interaction significantly decrease reaction time, making it more difficult to avoid hazards or respond effectively to emergencies.

Impaired Judgment: Distraction caused by PED use can impair judgment and decision-making, leading to errors in navigation, speed control, and maneuvering.

Violation of Regulatory Requirements: The use of PEDs while performing safety-related duties violates existing regulations, including those related to watchstanding and bridge resource management.

Sector Ohio Valley strongly recommends the following measures be implemented to mitigate the risks associated with PED use:

Implement a Clear Policy: Establish a clear company policy that prohibits or severely restricts the use of PEDs while operating commercial vessels. This policy should outline specific circumstances in which PED use is permitted (e.g., emergencies, essential business communications).

Enforce the Policy: Actively enforce the company policy through training, monitoring, and disciplinary action for violations.

Provide Training: Provide comprehensive training to all crew members on the dangers of distracted operation and the importance of maintaining situational awareness. This training should cover the effects of PED use on reaction time, judgment, and overall performance.

Promote a Culture of Safety: Foster a culture of safety that discourages the use of PEDs while performing safety-critical tasks. Encourage crew members to speak up if they observe unsafe practices.

Designated Phone-Free Zones: Consider designating specific areas on the vessel, such as the wheelhouse, as a "phone-free zone."

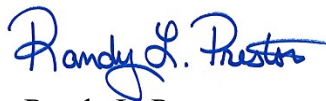
Proper Planning and Communication: Plan voyages thoroughly and communicate effectively with relevant parties prior to and during the transit. This can minimize the need for urgent communications while underway.

Remember your duty to report: Remember your obligation to report marine casualties and serious marine incidents to the Coast Guard in a timely manner as required by 46 CFR 4.

The use of PEDs while performing safety-related duties, particularly while underway, is a serious violation existing safety regulations including but not limited to the U.S. Coast Guard's Navigation Rules which requires mariners to maintain a proper "lookout" by sight and sound. This practice can compromise vessel control and safe handling, which must be maintained at all times until the vessel is safely anchored or moored. Violations of these regulations, including those related to watchstanding and bridge resource management, can result in civil penalties and/or other enforcement actions, such as suspension and revocation actions against Coast Guard credentialed mariners.

Sector Ohio Valley urges all owners, operators, and crew members of commercial vessels to take immediate action to address the dangers of PED use. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this MSIB, we can collectively work to improve the safety of navigation and protect our waterways.

Questions concerning this bulletin should be directed to Steven.M.Leighy@uscg.mil.



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