

# MASTER'S GUIDE

## Vessel Traffic Services

The provisions on vessel traffic services are laid down in the Vessel Traffic Service Act 623/2005 and in the Government Decrees on Vessel Traffic Service 763/2005, 1798/2009, 1304/2011 and 1216/2018.

### PARTICIPATION IN VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES

Vessels of 24 metres in length overall or more are obliged to participate in the vessel traffic services.

When navigating in the VTS area, vessels are required to maintain a continuous listening watch on the working channel used in the area. Furthermore, vessels are obliged to obey the rules relevant to the traffic in the VTS area. More detailed instructions about the required reports and working channels can be found in the regional VTS guide.

Vessels navigating in the VTS area, which are not obliged to participate in the vessel traffic services, are recommended to maintain a listening watch on the working channel in the VTS area or sector in question.

### OPERATIONAL HOURS AND LOCATION OF VTS CENTRES

In Finland the vessel traffic services (VTS services) are operated by Fintraffic Vessel Traffic Services Ltd (Fintraffic VTS). VTS centres are located in Turku, Helsinki and Lappeenranta.

The sea areas at the Finnish coast are divided into six VTS areas. These are Bothnia VTS, West Coast VTS, Archipelago VTS, Hanko VTS, Helsinki VTS and Kotka VTS. In addition, Saimaa VTS operates in the Saimaa deep water fairway.

Along the coast VTS services are provided 24 h/day throughout the year. There may be operational interruptions due to technical problems or an unexpected shortage of personnel. Information about the interruptions is given as navigational or local warnings. Saimaa VTS only provides services during its period of operations. The period of operations is largely equivalent to the opening hours of the Saimaa Canal, but Fintraffic VTS will provide information about when the operational period begins and ends.

### SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE VTS CENTRES

Vessel traffic services include information, navigational assistance and traffic organization.

VTS Areas along the coast provide all three service levels as described below. Saimaa VTS provides the service Information.

To improve safety and to create a consistent maritime situational awareness, English is used as the primary communication language in the VTS areas along the Finnish coast. As required, vessel traffic services are provided also in Finnish, Swedish and English.

**Information** is given to all vessels whenever necessary, at set intervals, when they report or when a vessel so requests. The information to vessels comprises matters which affect the vessels' safe and smooth navigation. Examples of such information are other vessels in the VTS area, circumstances as well as the condition of the aids to navigation and fairways. The VTS monitors the vessel movements and when necessary informs vessels about any dangers threatening them. The service Information is provided in all fairway sections in VTS Areas.

**Navigational assistance** can be given to identified vessels on request or when deemed necessary by the VTS. Navigational assistance is only advisory and normative; the master of the vessel is still responsible for the manoeuvring of the vessel. Navigational assistance may include information about the vessel's position and bearings/courses over ground to for example the fairway centre line or the pilot boarding place. Bearings or COG's can also be given so that vessels can pass navigational hazards, for example shoals, at a safe distance. The information provided is based on the data received from the radar or the AIS system used in the VTS centre. Navigational assistance is provided in the VTS areas along the coast at open sea, from the open sea to the vicinity of pilot boarding places and outer anchorages.

**Vessel traffic is organized** in order to improve traffic flow and safety. To organize traffic, there are areas within the VTS areas with permanent meeting and overtaking prohibition. In addition, traffic can be separated in the permanent overtaking and meeting prohibition areas as well as near the pilot boarding places, considering the traffic situation and weather conditions. The aim is to prevent dangerous meeting and overtaking situations and congestion.

The services provided in the different VTS areas are described in the regional part of the Master's Guide.

## INCIDENTS

In exceptional situations, such as extraordinary weather conditions, search and rescue situations or any other incidents in which vessel traffic is restricted or put at risk, the VTS can temporarily close a fairway or fairway section, issue speed limits or instruct vessels to anchor.

Vessels must immediately report all incidents relating to maritime safety to the VTS centre. Vessels involved in an accident or in imminent danger at sea should first contact the MRCC (tel. +358 294 1000). In the Lake Saimaa region, vessels should contact the emergency response centre (tel. 112) or the VTS centre.

## THE MASTER OF THE VESSEL – RESPONSIBILITY AND OBLIGATION TO REPORT

The vessel's participation in the vessel traffic services does not affect the master's responsibility for manoeuvring the vessel. If the master of the vessel, for a valid reason relating to the vessel's safety, is unable to participate in the vessel traffic services, or to follow the instructions given by the VTS in exceptional situations, he must immediately inform the VTS about this.

The master must notify the VTS of the following events taking place in the VTS area or its vicinity:

- any incidents or accidents affecting the safety of the vessel, such as collisions, grounding, damage, malfunction or breakdown, flooding or shifting of cargo, any defects in the hull or structural failure
- any incidents or casualties affecting the safety of the vessel, such as failures likely to affect the vessel's manoeuvrability or seaworthiness, or any defects affecting the propulsion system or steering gear, the electrical power generating system, navigation equipment or communications equipment
- any circumstances liable to cause pollution of the waters or shore, such as the discharge or threat of discharge of polluting materials into the sea

- any slick of polluting materials and containers or packages seen drifting at sea

When vessels agree on matters concerning traffic situation, they shall discuss it on the VTS channel.

## **REQUEST FOR ACCESS TO VTS RECORDS**

The traffic image of the VTS area and the related VHF radio communication is saved in the VTS centres. The records are stored for at least 30 days.

Access to records is priced on commercial grounds. Access to records for use by authorities is free of charge. Provisions on the conditions for access have been laid down in the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999).

## **PILOTAGE**

Vessels must use a pilot on public fairways which are located in Finnish waters and the part of the Saimaa Canal leased by Finland and which have been defined as fairways requiring pilotage, if pilotage is required by the hazardous or harmful nature of the cargo or the size of the vessel. The Pilotage Act gives further provisions regarding the vessels for which pilotage is compulsory.

If a vessel has been granted a Pilot Exemption Certificate or it has been granted exemption from compulsory pilotage, the master of the vessel shall, upon entry into a VTS area, report the number of the exemption to the VTS centre. This report can also be submitted in advance. An advance notice can be made for several voyages at the same time.

### **Pilotage order**

Finnpilot Pilotage Ltd is responsible for the pilotage in Finland. Pilot orders shall be submitted to Finnpiilot's Pilot Order Centre. Pilotage order form: [www.pilotorder.fi](http://www.pilotorder.fi).

Helsinki pilotage area (Emäsalo, Helsinki, Porkkala) and Hanko

Internet: [www.pilotorder.fi](http://www.pilotorder.fi)  
Email: [pilotorder.south@finnpilot.fi](mailto:pilotorder.south@finnpilot.fi)  
Tel: +358 (0) 400 907 977  
Fax: +358 (0) 29 52 53010

## **ANCHORING**

A vessel must always notify both the VTS and the Finnish Border Guard when anchoring in Finland's territorial waters. The vessel must make the notification either itself or through its agent. In addition, a vessel anchoring in territorial waters is required to make an electronic customs declaration, even if the vessel is not going to call at a Finnish port.

After leaving a port in Finland, the vessel must also check with the Finnish Border Guard whether anchoring in Finnish territorial waters is possible. Also in this case, a vessel remaining at anchor must make an electronic customs declaration.

### **WINTER NAVIGATION 1.11.-31.5.**

The Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency publishes instruction "Finland's winter navigation" every year on its website <https://vayla.fi/en/transport-network/waterways/winter-navigation>. Information about new instructions will be given in a press release.

All vessels arriving for the first time of the icebreaking season to a Finnish or Swedish assistance area will be asked the following question:

"Will you commit to compliance with the general instructions on icebreaker assistance published by the national maritime authorities?"

The answer to the question is "yes" or "no". The answer "yes" entitles icebreaker assistance and does not incur any expenses for the vessel. The answer "no" will affect the provision of future icebreaker assistance to Finnish ports.

The vessel or the shipping company can send the answer in advance by e-mail to Turku Radio ([turku.radio@fintraffic.fi](mailto:turku.radio@fintraffic.fi)) which forwards the information to authorities. Shipping companies can send a combined answer in advance for all their vessels operating in the area.

### **BALTIC SEA WASTE FEE**

In the Baltic Sea region, a waste fee is always charged from vessels during port visits. MARPOL I, IV and V waste may be left at ports without an additional fee, as the obligatory waste fee also covers the reception of these types of waste. Delivering this waste at port is highly recommended, as the Baltic Sea is classified as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area. Vessels should notify the port of their waste at least 24 hours before arriving at the port or, if the journey will take less than 24 hours, no later than when leaving the previous port. More information is in the Baltic Sea Waste Fee brochure, which can be found on Fintraffic VTS's website at <https://www.fintraffic.fi/en/vts/masters-guide>.

### **NEW DEPTH REFERENCE LEVEL N2000 (BSCD2000) FOR CHARTS**

Finnish nautical charts and fairways are currently in the process of switching over to a new harmonized reference level for depth information that is tied to the national N2000 height system. The current reference level for depth information in sea areas is based on mean water level, and it will be replaced with a reference level that is tied to the N2000 vertical coordinate reference system. The migration to the new depth information reference level will affect the depth and fairway information presented on nautical charts.

More information on the website <https://www.traficom.fi/en/services/sailing-directions-finnish-waters>.

## Helsinki VTS, sector 1 Helsinki and Vuosaari

### VTS AREA

The VTS Area covers the area off Helsinki including the merchant shipping lanes in the area between Kytö lighthouse, Helsinki caisson and Kalkkiranta. The sector also covers the area administered by the Port of Helsinki.

Coordinates of the sector's corner points:

1. 60°08.7'N, 024°43.5'E
2. 59°55.5'N, 024°43.5'E
3. 59°58.2'N, 025°20.0'E
4. 60°10.3'N, 025°20.0'E
5. 60°15.5'N, 025°25.0'E

The services provided by the VTS centres are described in more detail in the general description of the VTS operations.

### REPORTING PROCEDURES

The working channel of Helsinki VTS sector 1 is VHF 71.

Reports should include the following information:

- Name of the vessel
- Name of reporting point
- Destination
- Intended route. If an alternative route is selected, this must be reported

Required reports

- upon entry into the VTS Area
- before anchoring
- before leaving an anchorage
- after berthing
- before leaving port; for Port of Helsinki, see chapter "Permission to depart from the port of Helsinki"
- at the reporting points in the area:
  - Vessels must report 15 mins before arriving at the Kustaanmiekka or Särkänsalmi straits
  - Northbound vessels must report when passing Itätoukki
  - Vessels must report 15 mins before passing Kuiva Hevonen in the coastal fairway
- Commuter ferries must report only in restricted visibility.

### PERMISSION TO DEPART FROM THE PORT OF HELSINKI

Before departure from Port of Helsinki, vessels shall request a permission to depart from VTS.

In Helsinki South Harbour and West Harbour, vessels must submit a departure report when they are ready to depart in 5 minutes. In West Harbour during strong winds (maximum wind speed 15 m/s) the vessel will not

be granted permission to depart if another vessel, with a length over 215 m, is already in or about to enter the manoeuvring basin.

In Vuosaari Harbour vessels must submit a departure report when they are ready to leave port. VTS grants or denies permission to depart from the port depending on the traffic situation. VTS does not grant permission to depart if there is a vessel in the fairway entering the harbour, and that vessel has passed Itätoukki, reported 15 minutes to Kuiva Hevonen or entered the area from the east from another sector. A granted permission to depart is in force for 15 minutes during which time the vessel must get underway. The vessel is required to give a report when underway. If the vessel is not ready to depart within 15 minutes and there are other vessels waiting for their turn to enter the area where meeting and overtaking is prohibited, the vessel misses its turn to depart. In that case the vessel must request a new permission to depart from VTS. The procedure regarding permission to depart also concerns vessels moving from one berth to another in the harbour area.

All vessels, except those in liner traffic sailing according to a published timetable, must give a preliminary notice of departure after berthing. Any changes to the time of departure indicated in the notice of departure or in the published liner traffic timetable must be reported to VTS as soon as possible. If a vessel departs later than the time reported in the notice of departure, the vessel must immediately report also this to the VTS. VTS uses the data in the notice of departure for advance planning of the use of the fairway and the icebreaking in the harbour area. The procedure of giving a notice of departure does not apply to piloted vessels.

### **Procedures in the Vuosaari fairway**

Vessels reporting at Itätoukki, entering the sector 1 area from the east or reporting 15 minutes prior to passing Kuiva Hevonen, will be given information by the VTS about meeting traffic and other information relevant to the safe passage of the ship.

During strong winds (mean wind 13 m/s or more) the VTS recommends that vessels in Vuosaari fairway only meet south of Östra Rödhällen. The VTS does not organize the traffic of meeting vessels outside the area where meeting and overtaking is prohibited, but vessels are requested to agree among themselves on how to meet safely.

When the use of the fairway is restricted due to the wind situation and vessels have to wait for entrance into the fairway, they have the option to reduce speed in order to ensure a safe meeting south of Östra Rödhällen. When organizing the traffic, the VTS makes sure that the vessel does not lose its turn to enter the fairway because of its reduced speed, by taking into account the original speed at which the vessel would have arrived at Itätoukki.

### **Procedures in the approach fairway to Helsinki West Harbour**

VTS organizes inbound and outbound vessels to the West Harbour according to the schedules submitted by the vessels in advance.

Inbound vessels are well in advance informed about the order in which to enter the fairway. The order is based on the agreed berthing times obtained by the Port of Helsinki.

## AREAS WHERE MEETING AND OVERTAKING IS PROHIBITED

Meeting and overtaking is permanently prohibited in the following areas covered by Helsinki VTS sector 1:

1. in Särkänalmi strait between latitudes 60°08.8'N and 60°09.1'N in the 7.9 m fairway.
2. in the Kustaanmiekka strait between latitudes 60°08.1'N and 60°08.6'N.
3. in the 9.6 m fairway in the northern part of the Vuosaari fairway, between latitudes 60°11.1'N and 60°12.5'N. This prohibition does not apply to meeting and overtaking situations in which at least one of the parties is a tug or a vessel whose size is comparable to a tug.

## SPEED LIMITS

1. In all fairway sections leading to a Helsinki port north of the latitude 60°06.0'N with Itäkari as the eastern limit: 30 km/h
2. In the harbour basins in the Port of Helsinki and around Klippan: 10 km/h
3. In the Vuosaari fairway a speed limit of 30 km/h is in force between Östra Rödhällen and Krokholmshället.
4. A speed limit of 17 km/h is in force between Krokholmshället and Vuosaari Harbour as well as in the Vuosaari Harbour area.
5. During the winter season (1 November - 31 March) a speed limit of 24/h will be in force in the Vuosaari fairway between Krokholmshället and Vuosaari Harbour.

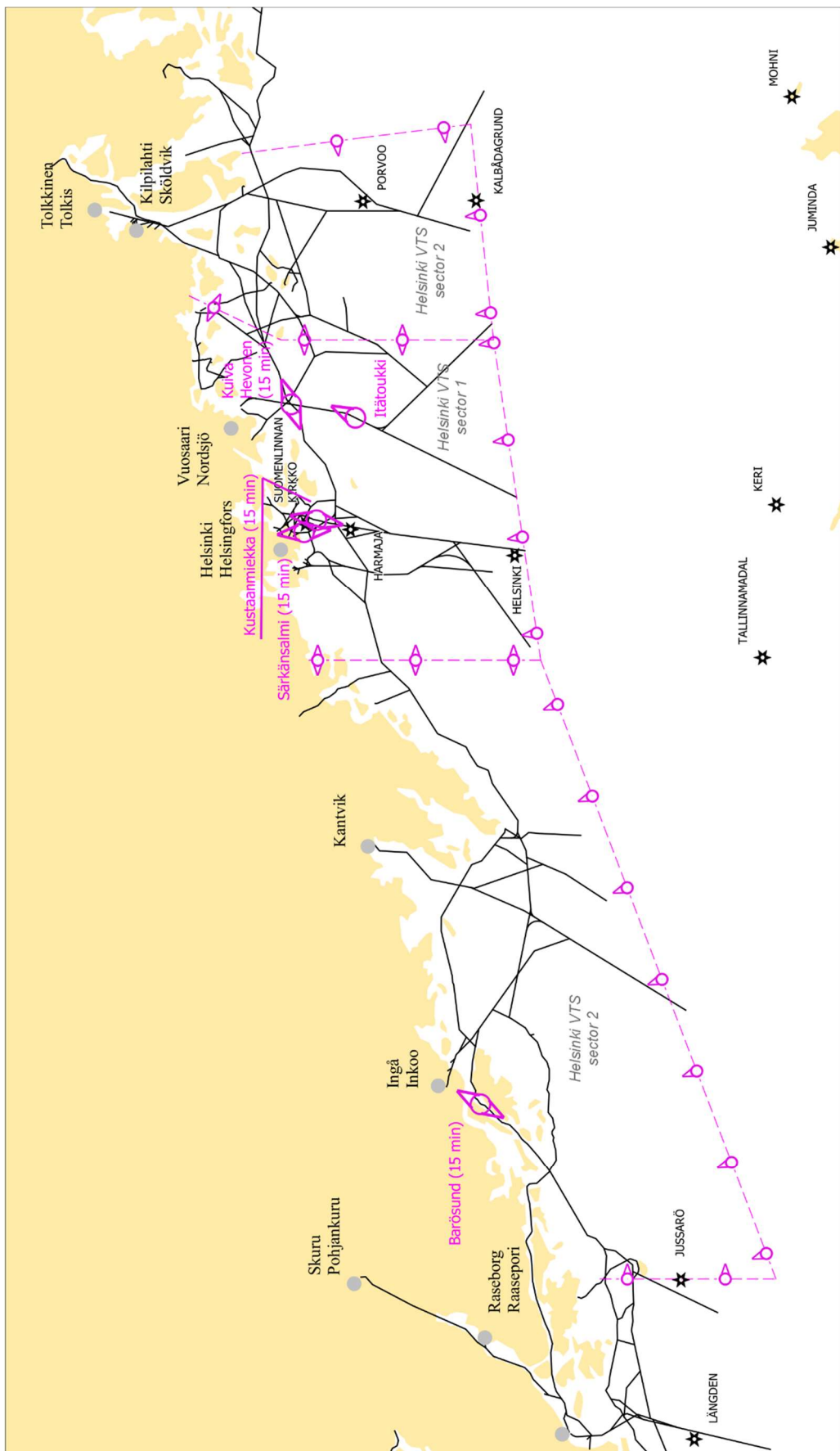
## CONTACT INFORMATION

Gulf of Finland Vessel Traffic Centre  
Vilhonvuorenkatu 2-4  
00500 Helsinki

Telephone: +358 20 448 5385  
Fax: +358 20 448 5380  
E-mail: [helsinki.vts@fintraffic.fi](mailto:helsinki.vts@fintraffic.fi)  
VHF: ch.71

Supervisor  
Telephone: +358 20 448 5391  
E-mail: [supervisors.hki@fintraffic.fi](mailto:supervisors.hki@fintraffic.fi)

Helsinki VTS



© Fintraffic VTS 2021-9-13 Fintraffic / MA



**UPDATES**

Date	Changes
25.11.2020	Instructions for winter navigation
07.01.2021	Company's logo, name and e-mail addresses changed
17.01.2021	Procedures in Vuosaari
17.03.2021	A new text about anchoring. A new link to winter navigation's website.
06.04.2021	Procedures in Vuosaari
22.04.2021	Eastbound and westbound vessels must report 15 mins before passing Kuiva Hevonen in the coastal fairway
09.06.2021	Procedures in Vuosaari. Reporting point of Kuiva Hevonen. Information about Baltic Sea Waste Fee.
22.06.2021	When vessels agree on matters concerning traffic situation, they shall discuss it on the VTS channel.
17.09.2021	Vessels must report 15 mins before passing Kuiva Hevonen in the coastal fairway. Improved structure of the Master's Guide.
31.03.2022	Information about new depth reference level N2000 for charts.