

# 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 and Helsinki.

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

The vessel shall use a pilot in the Finnish pilotage area, unless otherwise provided by the VTS fairway-specific limitation on the obligation to use a pilot or the vessel's cargo. The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency's regulation TRAFICOM/452299/03.04.01.00/2022 lays down provisions on the obligation to use a pilot and the related procedures in Finnish waters.

The vessel shall give the Pilot Dispatch Centre an advance notification of the need for pilotage at least 24 hours and 12 hours before arriving at the pilot boarding position and at least 12 hours and 6 hours before leaving the port. The advance notification shall include information on, for example, the need for pilotage, the technical characteristics of the vessel, the draught of the vessel at the beginning of pilotage, any technical deficiencies affecting pilotage, and other deficiencies that affect the safety of the pilot or pilotage negatively. The information will be submitted to Finnpiilot, which will forward the information to VTS. For more details on the advance notification, please visit Finnpiilot at <https://finnpilot.fi/en/for-customers/service-terms-for-pilotage/>.

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

Finnpiilot Pilotage Ltd is responsible for the pilotage in Finland. Pilot orders shall be submitted to Finnpiilot's Pilot Dispatch Centre.

Saimaa Pilot Dispatch Area (Saimaa)

Internet: <https://finnpilot.fi/en/for-customers/pilot-dispatch/>

Email: [pilotdispatch.saimaa@finnpilot.fi](mailto:pilotdispatch.saimaa@finnpilot.fi)

Tel: +358 (0) 29 525 3480

## 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.



1.9.2023

Saimaa VTS

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.

Vessels are requested to report observations of ice accretion to the Finnish Meteorological Institute primarily by filling in the form on the website <https://virpo.fmi.fi/reports/> or by email to Turku Radio.

## **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>.

## **THE NOTICE OF CHANNEL USE**

Use of channels that deviates from the channel design refers to a situation where a vessel uses a channel in a manner that deviates from the channel's design and the adequacy of the channel space cannot be ensured based on the design. If the vessel's static draught is greater than the channel's design draught taking into account the current water level, the vessel shall ensure that her net under keel clearance remains adequate and demonstrate it to the VTS Centre that is responsible for monitoring the fairway.

Vessel's operator, agent or master shall give the notice of channel use at least 24 hours before its arrival at the pilot boarding position, or if the vessel is expected to arrive in less than 24 hours, no later than when the vessel has left the port of departure for a Finnish port. A vessel departing a Finnish port shall give the notice of channel use as soon as possible, at latest when the departure report is given.

The notice of channel use shall include the following items:

- A. Vessel's name
- B. Which channel or part of channel the vessel is intending to use in a manner that deviates from the channel design
- C. What is the manner that deviates from the channel design
- D. Length between perpendiculars LBP and Breadth
- E. Static Draught
- F. Centre of Buoyancy, KB
- G. Centre of Gravity, KG
- H. Metacentric Height, GM
- I. Block Coefficient, C<sub>b</sub>

When ensuring the adequate net UKC and giving the notice of channel use, it is recommended to utilize the tools provided by the Finnish Transport and Infrastructure Agency (<https://vayla.fi/en/service-providers/merchant-shipping/navigating>). The notice of channel use can be given in the form of a squat calculation made with the Squat Calculator with regard to items D–I. The calculation can be shared as a link, or as a pdf-printout sent by e-mail to the VTS Centre. When using the Squat Calculator, it is enough to write the information of points A–C in the e-mail.

In Archipelago VTS, Bothnia VTS, Saimaa VTS and West Coast VTS monitoring areas the notice of channel use should be sent to the email address [supervisors.west@fintraffic.fi](mailto:supervisors.west@fintraffic.fi). Title the email "Notice of channel use".

The channel descriptions including depth and design data with general notes on usage of the main approach channels are published in Sailing Directions for Finnish waters published by Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (<https://www.traficom.fi/en/services/sailing-directions-finnish-waters>).

## Saimaa VTS

### VTS AREA

Saimaa VTS Area covers the deep fairways of the Lake Saimaa area and begins from the mouth of Saimaa Canal. Saimaa Canal is not included in the VTS Area.

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

### REPORTING PROCEDURES

The working channel of Saimaa VTS is VHF 9.

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.
- Length of tow

Departure report:

Vessels arriving to Lake Saimaa shall submit a departure report upon departure from Mälkiä lock.

Required reports:

- upon entry into the VTS area
- when leaving the VTS area
- before anchoring
- before leaving an anchorage
- after berthing
- before leaving port/lock
- at the reporting points in the area: 10 minutes before passing the following places:
  1. Kuhaluoto, southbound
  2. Vekaransalonsalmi
  3. Hätingvirta
  4. Puumalansalmi
  5. Pahikka
  6. Vekaransalmi
  7. Härkinsalo, northbound
  8. Kommersalmi, southbound
  9. Laitaatsalmi
  10. Matarinsalmi
  11. Haponlahden kaivanto, northbound
  12. Sorsavirta, when arriving from the direction of Joensuu
  13. Virtasaari, when arriving from the direction of Varkaus
  14. Tappuvirta
  15. Tahkosalmi
  16. Sinikonniemi, southbound

17. Muuraispuro, northbound
18. Patasalmi, northbound
19. Kolikon kaivanto, southbound
20. Kortessalmi, northbound
21. Aittoluoto, southbound
22. Hanhivirta
23. Vihtakanta, report is not required if vessel has reported one hour before the opening bridge
24. Vuosalmi, northbound
25. Vuoharju, southbound

Vessels towing timber rafts are an exception to the above. These should report to the VTS when approaching the above-mentioned narrow passages so far in advance that the towage can be interrupted before the narrow passage, due to for example a vessel in distress or some other obstruction.

#### Opening bridges

- Vihtakanta

In case a vessel using deep water route wants Saimaa VTS to order the opening of the bridge, the vessel must report to Saimaa VTS one hour before passing it.

#### SPEED LIMITS

The speed limits in the deep-water routes of the VTS area are:

1. Haponlahti Canal
  - 9 km/h when vessel's draught exceeds 3,5 m
  - 13 km/h when vessel's draught is 3,5 m or less
2. Laitaatsalmi 15 km/h
3. Kaukaanselkä 9 km/h
4. Vihtakanta 9 km/h
5. Kortessalmi 9 km/h
6. Pitkälänniemi 9 km/h
7. Pussilantaipale
  - 9 km/h when vessel's draught exceeds 3,5 m
  - 13 km/h when vessel's draught is 3,5 m or less
8. Muuraispuro Canal
  - 13 km/h when proceeding southbound and downstream
  - 9 km/h in other cases
9. Leppävirta 15 km/h
10. Rahasalmi 9 km/h

In addition, there are speed limits in the harbour areas presented in the port regulations.



1.9.2023

Saimaa VTS

## OTHER REMARKABLE

The Haponlahti-Heinsalmi fairway section has aids to navigation, whose brightness are automatically adjusted according to the visibility conditions and the AIS traffic (Class A) in the area. Automatic adjustment is only available in the dark and can only increase the light output of the aids to navigation beyond their nominal intensity. Visibility is measured using a visibility sensor placed on the Vihtakanta bridge. There may be wide local variations in visibility conditions, so the information provided by the visibility sensor does not necessarily represent visibility throughout the entire fairway. Upon request, the VTS can also manually increase or decrease the brightness of the aids to navigation.

Upon request, VTS can adjust the brightness of aids to navigation also in the Laitaatsalmi fairway section.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Western Finland Vessel Traffic Centre

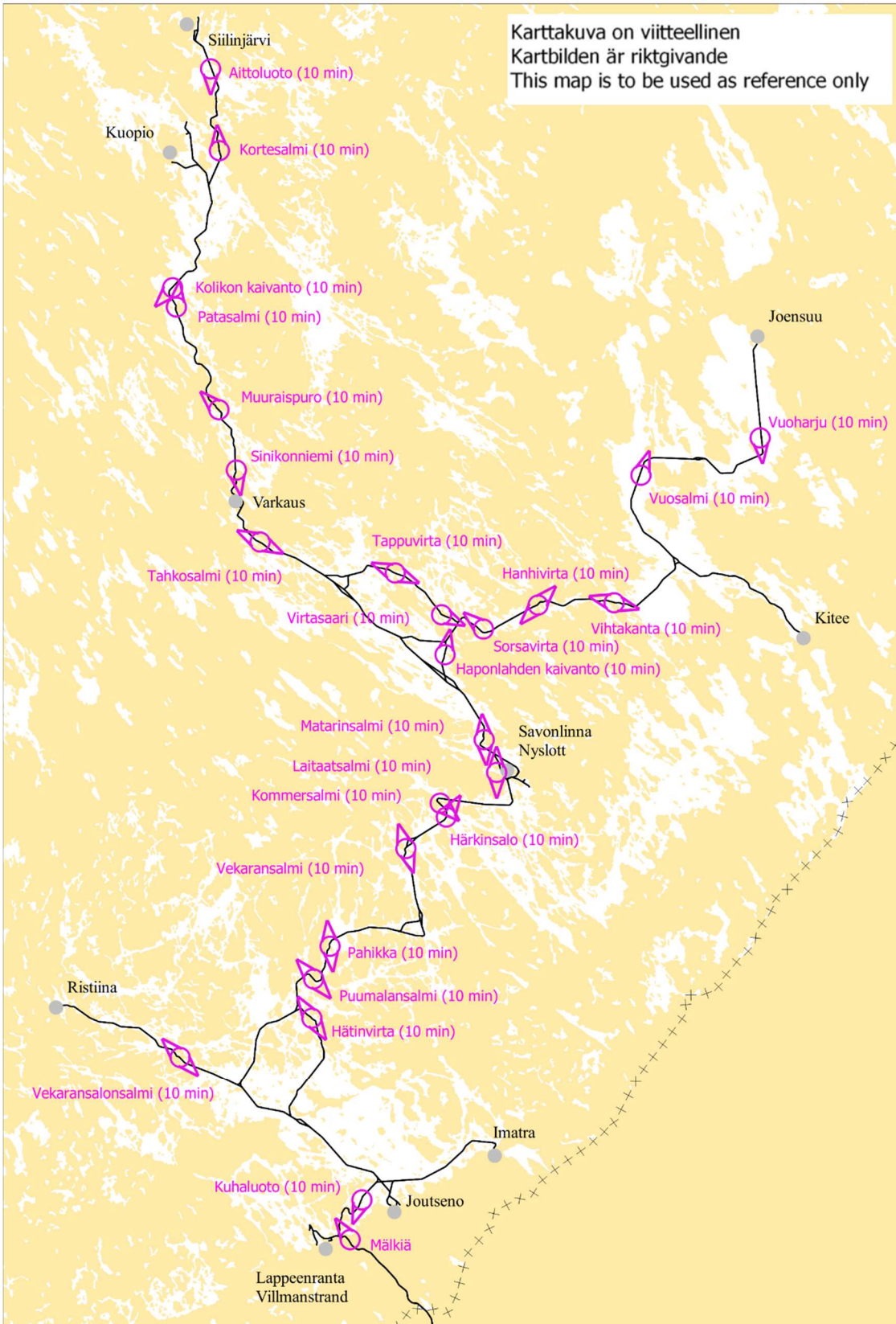
Telephone: +358 20 637 3745 (all phone calls will be recorded)  
E-mail: [saimaa.vts@fintraffic.fi](mailto:saimaa.vts@fintraffic.fi)  
VHF: ch. 9

Supervisor  
Telephone: +358 20 448 6522 (all phone calls will be recorded)  
E-mail: [supervisors.west@fintraffic.fi](mailto:supervisors.west@fintraffic.fi)

Saimaa Canal, Taipale Canal and Konnus Canal operate in the VHF channel 11.



Saimaa VTS



1.9.2023

Saimaa VTS

## UPDATES

| Date       | Changes  |
|------------|--|
| 15.11.2020 | Speed restriction in Leppävirta 9 km/h → 15 km/h   |
| 18.11.2020 | Speed restriction in Laitaatsalmi → 15 km/h  |
| 25.11.2020 | Instructions for winter navigation   |
| 07.01.2021 | Company's logo, name and e-mail addresses changed  |
| 12.03.2021 | <p>Upon request, VTS can adjust the brightness of floating aids to navigation in the Haponlahti-Vihtakanta fairway section.</p> <p>A new link to winter navigation's website.</p>                                      |
| 22.06.2021 | Information about Baltic Sea Waste Fee. When vessels agree on matters concerning traffic situation, they shall discuss it on the VTS channel.  |
| 29.11.2021 | <p>Upon request, VTS can adjust the brightness of aids to navigation in the following fairway sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Haponlahti-Heinsalmi</li> <li>▪ Laitaatsalmi</li> </ul>           |
| 01.07.2022 | Automatic adjustment of the brightness of aids of navigation between Haponlahti and Heinsalmi from the 10 <sup>th</sup> of July 2022.  |
| 01.11.2022 | A request to report observations of ice accretion to the Finnish Meteorological Institute.   |
| 16.01.2023 | <p>Contact information to Pilot Dispatch Centre updated.</p> <p>All phone calls to VTS will be recorded.</p>   |
| 05.06.2023 | <p>VTS Centre in Lappeenranta removed from the text. Changes in the contact information.</p> <p>Information about new depth reference level N2000 for charts.</p> <p>A new instruction: the notice of channel use.</p> |

1.9.2023

Saimaa VTS

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| 01.09.2023 | Changes in chapter "Pilotage" according to a new Pilotage Act. |
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