



LP Bulletin

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Bulletin 665 - 11/09 – Winter Navigation - Azov Sea

The Association would like to inform its Members about the conditions expected in the Azov Sea over the winter period. The sea generally freezes between November and March each year. The information below is intended to provide members with advice and guidance.

- The sea water freezing point of the brackish water of Azov sea is about - 0,4 C. The ice thickness is about 0,5 - 0,7 m in an average winter. The biggest obstacles to winter navigation are ridges which are normally thicker than the level ice and difficult to penetrate. Channels with thick side ridges and thick brash ice in the middle are formed when the ice cover in the fairway is repeatedly broken and frozen. The side ridges make passing of other vessels very difficult. Ridges also form when winds push ice together.
- The beginning and the end of ice navigation at Ukrainian Azov ports is stated in the formal order issued by the Mariupol Harbour Master. The Ice Operations Headquarters is headed by the Mariupol Harbour Master.
- Ice navigation is permitted for ice-classed vessels or, vessels with the confirmation from a Classification society that they are able to navigate in concrete ice conditions.



- The ice breaker convoy is a compulsory requirement for navigation in ice conditions within the Azov Sea. The decision to admit the vessel for navigation in the ice breaker convoy is taken by Ice Operations Headquarter on the basis of assessment of a combination of factors such as the ship's particulars, her technical characteristics and the current ice condition. The waiting time for the formation of the ice breaker convoy is between 10 and 20 days.
- If a vessel is not admitted to be included in the ice breaker convoy, she will not be allowed inward/outward passage. It becomes a matter of great importance for ships to be entered before the start of ice navigation. Between 7 and 10 vessels each year are forced to wait at Mariupol port, even in laden condition, until the ice navigation period is over.

- There is no Ukrainian statutory requirement for a ship to be weather routed when navigating in the Azov Sea in ice conditions but the Master may obtain and monitor the weather reports from Mariupol Commercial Port website www.marport.net or he can be provided with the ice report showing the current ice conditions of the Azov sea by their agent.
- The Master must submit a written application for an ice-breaker convoy to the Harbour Master. In the application, the Master should state the vessel's documents allowing her to navigate in ice conditions (Ice Class or Ice Strengthening), her seaworthiness, scantling details, screw material, kind and quantity of cargo on board, actual draft, main engine power, speed in open waters, Radars and VHF condition, fuel oil, fresh water and provisions on board. For each vessel provided with Mariupol port Ice Operations Headquarter's permission to enter into Azov Sea, the Shipowner must submit a written confirmation that the Master is acquainted with ice conditions and his acceptance to follow the ice-breaker at his own risk.
- Applications for all kinds of ice-breaker services should be filled in 48 hours before approaching the luminous Buoy No.1 in the Kerch Strait, or 24 hours before leaving port.
- The ingoing convoy is formed at the ice edge of Azov Sea as per instructions given by the Master of the ice-breaker and in accordance with the Ice Headquarter plan.
- The ice convoy from Kerch is for vessels bound for Mariupol but vessels bound for Berdyansk, Ukraine could be included. These vessels continue with the convoy up until the Berdyansk bank is abeam and, then, they turn to port and proceed without the ice-breakers assistance which can be dangerous as this activity causes frequent cases of ships blocking in ice and even running aground.

Source of information: Azovlloyd P&I Service Ltd
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