

# Recommandation pour les signaux régissant le trafic portuaire

Recommandation AISM E-111  
mai 1998

(non disponible en français, traduction en cours)

## Recommendation on Port Traffic Signals

IALA Recommendation E-111  
May 1998

*This is a reprint of the joint IALA, IAPH, PIANC  
Recommendation for Port Traffic Signals,  
dated June, 1992*

*The Technical contents of this reprint are identical  
to the original joint Recommendation. However, the  
"Introduction", while retaining the same substance,  
has been drafted to bring it in line with the current  
format of IALA Recommendations*



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## **IALA Recommendation on Port Traffic Signals**

**(IALA Recommendation E-111 , May, 1998)**

### **THE COUNCIL:**

**RECALLING** that an international agreement on unification of Port Signals was drawn up by the Lisbon Agreement, 1930, under the auspices of the League of Nations. It was signed by 14 countries but finally ratified by very few of them.

**RECOGNISING** that the Lisbon Agreement provides only very basic day and night signals, using lights and day shapes to the standard of the technology of the time; Lighthouse and Port Authorities were, in the early 1970's, of the view that the signals did not meet the needs of modern shipping using complex port entrances, sometimes with heavy traffic.

**RECOGNISING FURTHER** that, consequently, the Authorities concerned designed signals of their own, sometimes based on the Lisbon signals and sometimes not, which led to a large variety of signals in use requiring the mariner to refer to many reference books to comprehend even the simplest signals.

**CONSIDERING** that the three international organisations which have responsibility in the field of Port Signals namely:

1. International Association of Lighthouse Authorities (IALA);
2. International Association of Ports and Harbours (IAPH);
3. Permanent International Association of Navigation Congresses (PIANC);

therefore jointly decided that the whole question of Port Signals should be reviewed;

**CONSIDERING ALSO** that in 1974 a technical committee with representatives from all three organisations, drawn from 17 countries, was set up to study not only Port Signals but also Tidal and Gale Warning Signals which were also dealt with in the Lisbon Agreement;

**CONSIDERING FURTHER** that:

1. The Committee, assisted by a Working Group, completed its task in September 1981, and agreed a proposal on a set of Port Traffic Signals which were felt to be suitable to meet modern requirements and simple to memorise;
2. The proposals of the Committee were endorsed by the three sponsoring organisations to be recommended for use by their members;
3. With regard to the revision of Gale Warning Signals, it was considered that this was within the province of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and this organisation has been asked to avoid in future the use of signals which may be confused with Port Traffic Signals;
4. In the light of available modern technology, it was decided unnecessary to lay down a uniform set of rules for tidal signals. The signals provided in the Lisbon Agreement have largely been superseded by signals with alpha-numeric displays or other direct means of indicating water depth.

**TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION** the proposals of the IALA Engineering Committee;

**ADOPTS** the Principles, Rules and Port Traffic Signals set out in the Annex to this Recommendation;

1<sup>st</sup> May, 1998

**RECOMMENDS that:**

**National Members and other Lighthouse Authorities providing Port Traffic Signals ensure they comply with the principles, rules and port traffic signals set out in the Annex to this Recommendation**

ANNEX**Port Traffic Signals****THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SYSTEM OF PORT TRAFFIC SIGNALS**

It is intended that the rules for Port Traffic Signals shall be followed to control traffic movements in ports and port approaches. However, where no other conflicting rules exist, the appropriate authority may also use them to control traffic in other situations : for instance at locks or movable bridges. In view of the availability of modern technology, only lights are used.

The basis of the system is that there are :

- Main messages, which should be displayed through simple signals easy for the mariner to commit to memory.
- Additional information, for instance for ports with a complex layout, or complicated traffic situation, which can be displayed through the use of auxiliary signals exhibited together with the main ones, the comprehension of which would need the use of nautical documents.

It may be that in some ports only one or two of the main messages and signals will suffice, for example « Vessels shall not proceed », « Vessels may proceed, two way traffic » There may also be cases where the only message needed is « serious emergency ».

At ports where signals are used, every vessel must be able to follow a clear and explicit instruction. This means that a signal of some kind must always be displayed. However, in the case of a port where only the « serious emergency » signal is used, there is no need to display any signal in normal circumstances

In many situations, messages will not be the same in every direction and the signals will be directional. Some signals, however, may be « all round » when intended for all vessels simultaneously. This can be true for signals 1, 2 and 4.

The « serious emergency » signal must be flashing. All other signals may be fixed, or slow occulting. Slow occulting will be particularly useful when background glare is a problem. However, in a given location, a mixture of fixed and occulting light must not be used.

The main message always comprises 3 lights vertically disposed. This enables the mariner immediately to recognise it as being a Port Traffic Signal and not an aid to navigation. The vertical disposition of the lights in the Main Message was chosen, as horizontal disposition of lights can lead to problems of parallax when viewed from extreme angles.

In some cases, each vessel or special group of vessels must receive specific instructions to proceed and all other vessels must not proceed. In such cases, Signal 5 is to be used. The specific instructions to the relevant vessel or vessels may be given either by an Auxiliary Signal or by some other means of communication such as VHF radio, signal lamp or patrol boat.

An exemption message has been devised to accompany signals Nos 2 and 5 to permit vessels navigating outside the main channel to disregard the main message.

Auxiliary messages may be necessary to give information additional to that of the Main Message. The relevant signal is added as required, normally to the right of the column carrying the Main Message and normally utilising only white or yellow lights.

In places where both white and yellow lights are displayed as auxiliary signals, great care must be exercised as in certain conditions of visibility it is very difficult for the observer to decide whether a light is white or yellow when the other colour is not displayed simultaneously.

Although auxiliary signals normally use yellow or white lights, in exceptional cases, red or green lights may also be used for this purpose. However this may adversely affect the identification of the main signal. Furthermore, as red means « do not proceed » and green means « proceed », confusion might ensue if these two colours are displayed together.

The above considerations led to formulation of five rules and the development of the signals and messages as illustrated.

### **RULES FOR PORT TRAFFIC SIGNALS**

1. The Main Movement message given by a Port Traffic Signal shall always comprise 3 lights vertically disposed. No additional light shall be added to the column carrying the main message.
2. Red lights indicate : « Do not proceed ».
3. Green lights indicate « Proceed, subject to the conditions stipulated ».
4. A single yellow light displayed to the left of the column carrying main messages Nos 2 or 5, at the level of the upper light, may be used to indicate that « Vessels which can safely navigate outside the main channel need not comply with the main message ».
5. Signals auxiliary to the main signal may be devised by the appropriate Local Authority. Such auxiliary signals should employ only white and/or yellow lights and should be displayed to the right of the column carrying the main message.

