

Code of conduct for safe passage through the Hollandse Kust (zuid) wind farm zone

The North Sea has some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. The Dutch government aims for the space available to be used efficiently, by allocating different types of use to various sites. Off the coast of Zuid-Holland there is a passage way for small vessels through the Dutch Hollandse Kust (zuid) wind farm. This corridor is accessible to vessels with a maximum overall length of up to 46 metres.

In order to reduce safety risks to shipping in a wind farm passage way for small vessels where possible, it is important to comply with certain conditions. This code of conduct for safe passage through the Hollandse Kust (zuid) wind farm covers the rules¹ and safety recommendations for shipping to pass through the Hollandse Kust (zuid) wind farm passage way correctly.

Passage of small vessels under specific conditions

Passage through wind farm areas is associated with safety risks. The most significant dangers are the moving rotor blades and various high-voltage cables serving as underwater connections between the individual wind turbines and between the wind turbines and offshore high voltage platform. Passage of shipping increases the risk of damage to installations in the wind farm area. Moreover, it is more difficult for the emergency services to operate when called out to wind farm areas.

In the passage way for small vessels there are strict conditions and rules that must be observed; these are included in the Administrative Ruling of General Application establishing safety zones. Failure to observe the conditions for the use of the passage way for small vessels as specified in article 3 of the administrative ruling to establish the safety zone is an offence and penalties will be enforced. The passage way for small vessels is within the safety zone and recommendations have also been drawn up in addition to the rules that apply within the safety zone to further reduce any risks to shipping. Together with the rules, these recommendations are the code of conduct for safe passage through the Hollandse Kust (zuid) wind farm passage way for small vessels.

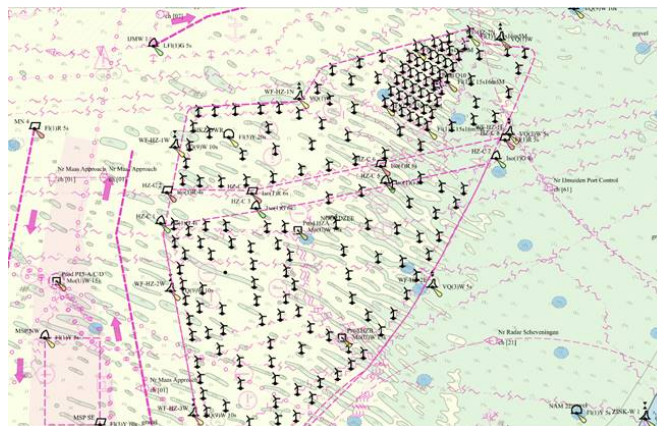


Figure 1. Overview of the Hollandse Kust (zuid) wind farm zone, including the corridor.

¹ Government Gazette 2023, 29556, Bekendmaking houdende een verbod zich te bevinden binnen de veiligheidszone van windenergiegebied Hollandse Kust (zuid) in de Noordzee [Announcement constituting a prohibition on entering the safety zone of Hollandse Kust (zuid) wind farm zone in the North Sea].

A passage way for small vessels with fairway marking on an east-west orientation is situated in the middle of the Hollandse Kust (zuid) wind farm.

The rules for the Hollandse Kust (zuid) passage way for small vessels

- Passage through the wind farm area is permitted solely in the specially designated passage way for small vessels and a distance of at least 150 metres from the wind turbines must be observed at all times. This distance also applies to objects extending from the vessel, such as lines, floats and hooks.
- Vessels with a max. length of up to 46 metres are permitted to use the corridor.
- Access to the passage way for vessels up to 46 metres in length applies both during the day and at night.
- An AIS transponder (at least class B) must be in operation and the VHF radio must be tuned to channel 16 for a listening watch. You shall respond when the call is addressed to you.
- It is not allowed to access the structures in the windfarm..
- A number of cables lie on the sea bed of the passage way for small vessels. As a consequence, it is not permitted to make contact with the sea bed: for example, by dropping anchor (for an exception to this rule see under [What to do in the event of emergency](#)) or trawling over the sea bed with nets.
- Use of a fishing rod in the passage way for small vessels is permitted, where this does not lead to disruptive or potentially hazardous situations for other shipping. Other fishing gear shall be fastened so that it cannot be used at short notice. Fishing vessels transitting through the passage way for small vessels shall ensure that their fishing gear is in full view on deck; in that way it is clear at all times that there is nothing dragging over the sea bed.
- Activities that could result in hazardous situations and other disruption within the passage way for small vessels are prohibited. Such activities include, but are not limited to, diving, kite surfing and reckless handling of the vessel. Furthermore, it is forbidden to throw fish (or any other) waste overboard, as this would attract birds.

Safety recommendations

Demonstrate good seamanship

1. Use nautical charts

Use up-to-date nautical charts with a sufficiently large scale, on which the safety zones, each individual wind turbine and the high-voltage cables are shown clearly.

2. Prepare for the voyage properly

Consult the Coast Guard safety messages before sailing through the passage way for small vessels. In that way, you will be aware of the current situation and any maintenance (or other) work and activities in the wind farms that could have an influence on safe passage.

3. Travel in good weather conditions

Do not enter the passage way for small vessels in heavy weather such as when visibility is restricted, a storm is imminent, winds are strong and waves are high. Adjust your speed and behaviour to the weather conditions.

4. Ensure that you have an operational motor

Ensure that upon entry to the passage way for small vessels your vessel has an engine that can be used immediately, if necessary to prevent your vessel from becoming unmaneuverable in the event of engine problems or poor sailing conditions. It is recommended that

small motor boats driven by an outboard engine have a spare engine on board.

5. Make sure you are visible

Use a radar reflector to increase your visibility (to radar and in general). Wear a life vest with a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) and use an AIS-SART so that the emergency services can locate you quickly in the event of emergency.

6. Take other shipping into account

When leaving or entering the passage way for small vessels, take other shipping into account; shipping outside the wind farm area may not be able to see you immediately. Shipping within the wind farm may be unable to make evasive manoeuvres due to the lack of space.

7. Do not throw waste overboard

Keep the sea clean: do not throw fish or other waste overboard. This could attract bird life and increase the risk of birds flying into the wind turbine rotor blades.

8. Be alert

If you see any disruptive activities or potentially hazardous situations, such as drifting nets or damage to installations, please report this to the Coast Guard on the VHF radio, using channel 16, under all circumstances. Where possible, please also state the numbering on the wind turbine(s). This helps in the localisation of incidents and potentially dangerous situations. Images or video footage of issues and/or hazardous situations can also be sent to the Coast Guard at the following e-mail address: ccc@kustwacht.nl.

If you are found to have acted in breach of the rules you will be fined, and any damage caused to cables, installations and/or wind turbines will be recovered from the person responsible.

What to do in the event of emergency

Please contact the Coast Guard

- In the event of emergency at sea, please contact the Coast Guard. The best way to do this is by using VHF radio, channel 16, or (if VHF is impossible) by telephone on: 0900-0111.
- Please be aware that it may take longer than expected for the emergency services to arrive on scene at a wind farm, as helicopters could be impeded by wind turbines.
- If, as a consequence of an emergency, you are forced to drop anchor, try to veer out the chain in a controlled manner. If nevertheless, you have dropped anchor in a wind farm, this shall always be reported to the Coast Guard. When doing so, please report the position of the incident.

Areas designated for new wind farms may be freely used by shipping until the start of construction. During construction, these areas will be closed; the areas in question will only be reopened for shipping and shared use once construction has been completed and the wind farm is operational.

Please visit noordzeeloket.nl for more information on applicable legislation.

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