Low Visibility Staffing Policies

Explanation

This describes the VTS San Francisco policy regarding Operations Center staffing during low visibility conditions.

Low Visibility

Visibility reported within the VTS area that is less than 0.5 nm.

Activation

The low visibility watch shall be activated under the following circumstances.

1. When low visibility conditions exist in the VTS area.
2. During periods when low visibility conditions are frequently changing.
3. Whenever the watch supervisor deems necessary.

Sector Position

The Watch Assistant sector position shall be used for the low visibility watch.

Display Configuration

The display console (the track plot) shall be configured to optimize the traffic manager's view of the low visibility area. As necessary, the following adjustments shall be made.

- Adjust radar range scale to optimize radar resolution.
- Re-scale chart areas to minimize clutter and improve resolution.
- Re-size track symbols to minimize clutter.
- Adjust track vectors to improve vessel position projection.
- Activate target trails to more easily detect subtle vessel movements.

Communications Configuration

Communications equipment shall be configured and manipulated to optimize low visibility watch effectiveness.

The low visibility traffic manager shall wear a headset.

By default, communications shall be configured like in the table below.

Channel	Capability
VHF Channel 14	Transceiver (TX)
VHF Channel 16	Transceiver (TX)
VHF Channel 13	Guard Receiver (GD)

Note: Radio channels may be adjusted to meet operational needs.

VTS Low Visibility Enforcement Procedures

Purpose

This part describes VTS decision criteria and procedures for enforcing the guidelines in the San Francisco Bay Region Harbor Safety Plan.

Authority

VTS enforces the guidelines in the Harbor Safety Plan by issuing directions in accordance with 33 CFR 161.11.

Terminology

The following terms are important to these procedures

Term	Definition
Critical Maneuvering Areas (CMA)	Areas where additional standards of care are required due to the restrictive nature of the channel, proximity of hazards, or the prevalence of adverse currents. See Appendix A for a list of the areas.
Large vessels	Any power driven vessel of 1600 gross tons or more, and tugs with tows of 1600 gross tons or more.

Guidelines
Harbor Safety Plan

The following guidelines are described in the San Francisco Bay Region Harbor Safety Plan (summarized).

Low visibility conditions…	Large vessels…
In a CMA along the route	Should not transit through that CMA
At the departure dock	Should not get underway
At the destination dock	When underway, should anchor unless proceeding is the safest option.

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VTS Low Visibility Enforcement Procedures, Continued

Enforcement Take the following action in the situations described below.

Vessel Status	Location of Low Visibility	Vessel's Action
Moored	Vessel's departure pier	Remain moored.
Moored	CMA along the vessel's route	Remain moored or proceed to anchorage.
Moored	Vessel's destination pier	Remain moored, unless the visibility is predicted to improve by the time the vessel would reach the location of low visibility
Anchored	CMA along the vessel's route	Remain anchored, unless the visibility is predicted to improve by the time the vessel would reach the location of low visibility
Anchored	Vessel's destination pier	Remain anchored, unless the visibility is predicted to improve by the time the vessel would reach the location of low visibility
Underway	CMA along the vessel's route	Vessel should not go through CMA. Alternatives include, but not limited to, anchoring, aborting, slowing, or holding position.
Underway	Vessel's destination pier	Anchor, unless proceeding is the safest option

Enforcement Communications VTS should process requests to deviate from visibility guidelines in accordance with Regulatory Communications Procedures.

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VTS Low Visibility Enforcement Procedures, Continued

Notification

If a vessel intends to deviate from the guidelines, VTS shall immediately brief the Sector Command Center (SCC). Include the following details.

- Visibility and traffic conditions
- Vessel intentions
- VTS concurrence? VTS's opinion of the risk.

Determining Visibility

Do the following to determine visibility.

1. Collect visibility reports from VMRS users as they pass through CMAs.
2. Do not consider visibility reports from vessels without radar.
3. Use CCTV cameras to rule out restricted visibility.
4. If visibility was reported as restricted at a CMA it should be considered restricted for 30 minutes or until another report is obtained. If no other report is obtained within 30 minutes, visibility is assumed acceptable.

Documentation

The following events must be documented.

Where	Triggering Event	Include These Details
Advisory	Visibility report	• Visibility distance. • Time of report. • Reporting source
Watch Log	Activating of low visibility watch	• Source of the information • Location and reported visibility
Watch Log	Securing the low visibility watch	• Source of the information • New reported visibility
REG REMARK	Intent to deviate or VTS action	• Time if REG REMARK is late • Reason for deviation or VTS action • Vessel intention details if needed • VTS directions given and outcome

Appendix A – Critical Maneuvering Areas

What they are

Excerpt from the Harbor Safety Plan

Critical Maneuvering Areas are areas within the Bay where additional standards of care are required due to the restrictive nature of the channel, proximity of hazards, or the prevalence of adverse currents. Large vessels should not transit through CMAs when visibility is less than 0.5 nautical miles.

Areas

Following are the critical maneuvering areas.

- Redwood Creek,
- San Mateo-Hayward Bridge
- Oakland Bar Channel
- Islais Creek Channel
- Richmond Inner Harbor,
- East Span Richmond-San Rafael Bridge
- Union Pacific Bridge
- Rio Vista Bridge.