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The Law of Lookouts

By Marilyn Raia

Many have said the most important rule of navigation rules is Rule 5, which requires each vessel to have a lookout:

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper lookout by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and the risk of collision.

The navigation rules, and in particular Rule 5, were designed specifically to prevent vessel collisions and allisions with stationary objects such as piers, bridges or obstructions to navigation.

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