

41217 3 2 1 Cold weather is a comin' friends and today we feature our fourth in a series of five segments on winter safety afloat. We have thoroughly covered how to drown at night in freezing weather far from shore by fighting with other drunks for alcoholic beverages in an overloaded piroough. And we have distilled Rules 2, 5, and 6 of the Rules of the Road into something my mother probably told me about 734 times, "Be careful, watch where you're goin', and don't go too fast."

While the Rules of the Road deal with operational aspects of safety afloat, the rules don't cover another important aspect of safety . . . seaworthiness of the vessel. A seaworthy vessel is staunch, tight, well equipped, and in all respects reasonably fit for her intended use. It is not required that she be fitted with the best available equipment or perfect machinery or the most qualified master and crew. But it is required that she be fitted with machinery, equipment, and crew reasonably suitable for the intended service of the vessel.

Seaworthiness is by nature a concept which changes to reflect the technical requirements of different vessels as well as the practicalities of different trades. A bilge pump suitable for a daysailer will be inadequate to service an offshore oil supply vessel and an anchor from the SEALAND INDEPENDENCE would be inappropriate for the CHARLES TOWNE PRINCESS. Many small craft would be unseaworthy if considered for the transatlantic trade, but would be found quite seaworthy for day tours of Charleston Harbor.

The admiralty courts have found unseaworthiness when injury or damage is caused by a drunken sailor, lack of proper fire fighting

equipment allows a fire to get out of hand, defective safety training for the crew leads to needless death, poor housekeeping on deck caused amputation of legs, broken machinery resulted in sinking, unsecured dunnage crushes a man, an unboxed compass causes a ship to run onto rocks, dim running lights cause a collision, dirty filters cause failure of ship engine on river bend, and lack of an ice cream scoop in the galley leads to gruesome injury when a cook uses a butcher knife to serve ice cream.

Next week on The Admiralty Docket, winter safety afloat . . . putting it all together. Until then, remember your rights and responsibilities may change as you approach the shore and may God Almighty grant you pleasant sailing.

---