

41210 3 2 1 Cold weather is a comin' friends and today we feature our third in a series of five segments on winter safety afloat. We thoroughly covered the don't of winter sailing during our first segment. Last week we covered Rule 2, known as the general prudential or "be careful" rule, and Rule 5, the lookout or "watch where you're goin'" rule.

Today, Rule 6, Safe Speed. Rule 6 provides: "Every vessel shall at all times proceed at safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions. In determining a safe speed the following factors shall be among those taken into account by all vessels: the state of visibility, the traffic density including concentration of fishing vessels or any other vessels, the maneuverability of the vessel with special reference to stopping distance and turning ability in the prevailing conditions, at night the presence of background light such as from shore lights or from back scatter of her own lights, the state of wind, sea, and current, and the proximity of navigational hazards, and the draft in relation to the available depth of water.

Rule 6 goes on to list additional factors to be considered by vessels with operational radar, including the characteristics, efficiency, and limitations of the radar equipment.

Except for no wake zones in the vicinity of docks and marinas and except for harbor speed limits in certain congested channels, we do not have speed limits on the navigable waters and high seas like the speed limits posted on our highways. Because conditions of

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wind and wave, tide and current, and visibility vary as widely as stopping distances and maneuverability of vessels, nautical speed limits are seldom used. Rather than a set speed limit, Rule 6 of the Rules of the Road operates much like the familiar highway law which prohibits driving too fast for conditions.

As my daddy used to say, "Son, it's hard to drive too slow or get your hair cut too short, or own too much land."

Next week on The Admiralty Docket, avoiding unseaworthy conditions. Until then, remember your rights and responsibilities may change as you approach the shore and may God Almighty grant you pleasant sailing.

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