



Marine Notice No. 31 of 2023

Notice to all Shipowners, Fishing Vessel Owners, Agents, Shipmasters, Skippers, Fishers, Yachtsmen and Seafarers

Reminder

Advice re Use of Appropriate Marker Buoys/Ropes when Engaged in Pot Fishing for Lobster, Crab or other Fish or Shellfish

NOTE: This Marine Notices supersedes Marine Notice No. 43 of 2021, which is now withdrawn

The Department of Transport reminds all vessel owners, agents, shipmasters, skippers, fishers, yachtsmen, seafarers and those engaged in pot fishing about the risks of vessels' propellers becoming entangled in ropes of marker buoys used to indicate the position of pots used for fishing lobster, crab, or other fish or shellfish. This can occur because the length of rope used to fix marker buoys is too long, resulting in the line floating on or just below the surface.

The use of too long a line of rope can result in a situation where even vessels that have taken a wide berth around marker buoys could have their propellers fouled by the rope.

Specifically, the department reminds those engaged in pot fishing not to use unsuitable 'floats' (e.g., empty drink cans, plastic bottles, dark-coloured floats, etc.), which offer poor visibility and/or could be mistaken for floating debris.

Fishers who carry out pot fishing (whether commercially or non-commercially) are reminded of their obligations to other users of the sea.

Furthermore, non-commercial pot fishers are reminded of the regulations made by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine covering such activity ([S.I. No. 31 of 2016](#) - Non-Commercial Pot Fishing (Lobster and Crab) Regulations 2016) which, inter alia, limits the numbers of pots permitted per boat to a maximum of six and restricts such pot fishing to the months of May to September.

Any mariners who spot any marker buoys/ropes (or any other object) in the water which they deem to represent a danger to navigation should communicate information on same to other vessels in the area and to the Irish Coast Guard or to the local competent authority so that a hazard warning can be issued, if appropriate, and any required follow-up action can be taken.

The Annex to this Marine Notice contains a guide for fishers and other users entitled 'Good Practice Guide to Pots and Marker Buoys'.

Note: Marine Notices are issued purely for maritime safety and navigation reasons and should not be construed as conferring rights or granting permissions.

Irish Maritime Directorate,
Department of Transport,
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.

21/04/2023

Encl: Annex

For any technical assistance in relation to this Marine Notice, please contact:
The Marine Survey Office, email: MSO@transport.gov.ie
For general enquiries, please contact the Maritime Safety Policy Division, email:
MaritimeSafetyPolicyDivision@transport.gov.ie
Written enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to:
Dept. of Transport, Maritime Safety Policy Division, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.
email: MarineNotices@transport.gov.ie or visit us at: www.gov.ie/transport

Annex

Good Practice Guide to Pots and Marker Buoys

1. Place all pots and marker buoys away from known regular routes used by local fishing vessels, passenger boats and pleasure craft.
2. Marker buoys are required to comply with the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority's Fisheries Information Notice (FIN) [06 of 2021](#) 'Marking and Identification of Fishing Gear', which summarises relevant EU legislation for marking of fishing gear.
3. The ropes used to attach marker buoys to pots should be just long enough to allow the marker buoys to float at high tide and not allow the rope to float on the surface.
4. Where a trailing length is required on a marker buoy to aid retrieval, it should be marked with a smaller 'tidal stream' buoy or flag to indicate the direction of the rope and the rope should be weighted down with lead rope or chain to keep it submerged.
5. The use of drink cans, plastic bottles, plastic footballs, etc. as marker buoys is not permitted.
6. Masters and skippers should keep an extra lookout in areas where fishing using static gear is common.
7. If you become entangled in a marker buoy or its ropes:
 - Dial 112 / 999 or use Marine VHF Channel 16 and Ask for Coast Guard even if you think you are able to disentangle yourself without assistance;
 - Note the position of the marker buoy and its ropes;
 - If you have to cut yourself free, try to re-buoy the cut end of the rope so that it is visible to others.
 - Try not to cut the rope short, which could cause it to remain submerged as an unseen hazard or become irretrievable. Discarded and irretrievable fishing gear can remain on the seabed and continue to 'ghost fish'¹ indefinitely.

¹ 'Ghost fishing' occurs where discarded or irretrievable fishing gear continues to fish. The trapped fish die and in turn become bait, attracting more fish and the cycle can continue until the pot or other gear finally disintegrates.