



IHB File N° S3/8152

**CIRCULAR LETTER 54/2010
23 August 2010**

Limitation in ECDIS Equipment Software

Dear Hydrographer,

1 As a result of investigations concerning a recent maritime incident, the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has informed the Directing Committee of a limitation in some ECDIS equipment software. It seems likely that some ECDIS software does not properly recognise and take into account isolated land areas that have been encoded in small-scale ENCs. This is particularly the case for ENCs depicting land areas in poorly or sparsely surveyed areas that contain little, if any surrounding bathymetric information. Notwithstanding the fact that IHO publication S52 section 8.5.1 'Safety Depth Contour' identifies a requirement to consider the circumstances described above, it appears that some ECDIS equipment does not do so.

2 As a result of its finding, the UKHO has informed the UK Maritime Administration that has, in turn, issued the following NAVAREA warning:

- As previously notified by NAVAREA warning, mariners using ECDIS are advised not to rely solely on automated voyage planning and monitoring checks and alarms. It is recommended that mariners undertake careful visual inspection of the entire planned route to confirm that it, and any deviations from it, is clear of dangers. The ECDIS display should be configured to display all soundings during this inspection.

- Particular care should be taken when planned routes cross areas where only small scale ENCs (Usage Bands 1 and 2) are available. In some display configurations, such as when no names are shown, small islands and other point features may be difficult to identify or could be obscured by surrounding depth contours. Some ECDIS systems appear only to undertake route check functions on larger scale ENCs and therefore alarms might not activate. This may not be clearly indicated on the ECDIS display.

- The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is leading technical action to investigate these matters in consultation with ECDIS equipment manufacturers. Further information will be made available through Notices to Mariners.

Given the global significance of this matter, the UK NAVAREA warning has been repeated in a number of other NAVAREAs.

3 The Directing Committee intend writing to all ECDIS equipment manufacturers and their relevant industry associations alerting them to the situation and seeking technical information that will help to determine whether the IHO and ENC producers (HO's) can do anything to assist in addressing this situation in both the short and the long term. The information received will be passed to the IHO Transfer Standards Maintenance and Applications Development Working Group (TSMAD) and the Digital Information Portrayal Working Group (DIPWG) for urgent consideration.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,



Robert WARD
Director