

Information to mariners regarding firing exercises

Firing exercises are frequently taking place in coastal waters of the Baltic Sea. In many cases national authorities declare the affected area to be “closed to navigation” or “dangerous to shipping”. The exercise areas are consequently quite often forming a hindrance to shipping.

To minimize the impact of these activities on shipping, vessels need to get relevant information timely in a clear and unambiguous way.

Information about firing exercises should preferably be promulgated through NtM in good time before the exercise take place. This will make it possible for the vessel to plan its voyage and this will make promulgation through NAVTEX unnecessary.

Navigational warning regarding firing exercises are however very common and they are unfortunately often long and difficult to understand. At present more than 50% of the navigational warning texts on Navtex in the Baltic Sea are dealing with firing exercises.

The available Navtex schedules are sometimes full which makes it necessary to leave out some less important warnings.

For the reasons given above Baltic Sea Sub-area Co-ordinator would like to give following recommendations to the Hydrographic Offices.

- Encourage the national authorities who are responsible for the exercises to, to the greatest possible extent restrict the exercises to existing, designated firing areas
- If designated firing areas do not exist, encourage the relevant authorities to establish such areas
- Show the limits and designations of firing areas on charts and ENC and, if feasible, also include contact information such as VHF-channel, call signal and telephone number to the command of the exercises or to an automatic answering machine
- Demand the national authorities who are responsible for the exercises to send information about coming exercises in good time, to the NtM-office.
- Include information about firing exercises in NtM
- In navigational warning dealing with firing exercises refer to charted, designated, exercise areas (if any) rather than listing coordinates for the affected areas.