

# Safe Passage Planning – Risk Assessment

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# Introduction

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*"A well-planned passage is not just a route on a chart – it's a mindset that anticipates danger, manages uncertainty and ensures that safety leads every decision."*



# Why risk assessment matters

- Safety First – lives depend on it
- Risk assessment helps identify potential hazards before they become real dangers. Whether it's unexpected weather, mechanical failure, or a crowded traffic separation scheme, foreseeing risks can prevent accidents and save lives.



# Why risk assessment matters

- The sea is unforgiving
- Unlike land-based travel, the sea offers little room for error. A small oversight can escalate into a major incident – grounding, collision, or loss of propulsion – often far from help. Risk assessment builds a buffer between you and disaster.



# Why risk assessment matters

- Supports better decision-making
- By evaluating risks, skippers make informed choices:
  - Should we delay departure due to approaching squalls?
  - Is this narrow channel too risky at low tide?
  - Do we have a plan if the autopilot fails?
- It moves decision-making from guesswork to judgment.



# Why risk assessment matters

- Enhances situational awareness
- Doing a proper assessment forces you to:
  - Look at charts in detail
  - Review equipment condition
  - Think through “what if” scenarios as this prepares your mind for the voyage ahead.



# Why risk assessment matters

- Reduces the likelihood of incidents
- Most maritime accidents stem from human error. Risk assessment is a mental safety net that helps prevent:
  - Navigational mistakes
  - Overconfidence in marginal weather
  - Underestimating fatigue or inexperience



# Why risk assessment matters

- You can't control the sea — But you can control how prepared you are
- You can't stop a squall, but you can:
  - Know where to seek shelter
  - Ensure the bilge pump works
  - Brief your crew
- That's risk assessment in action





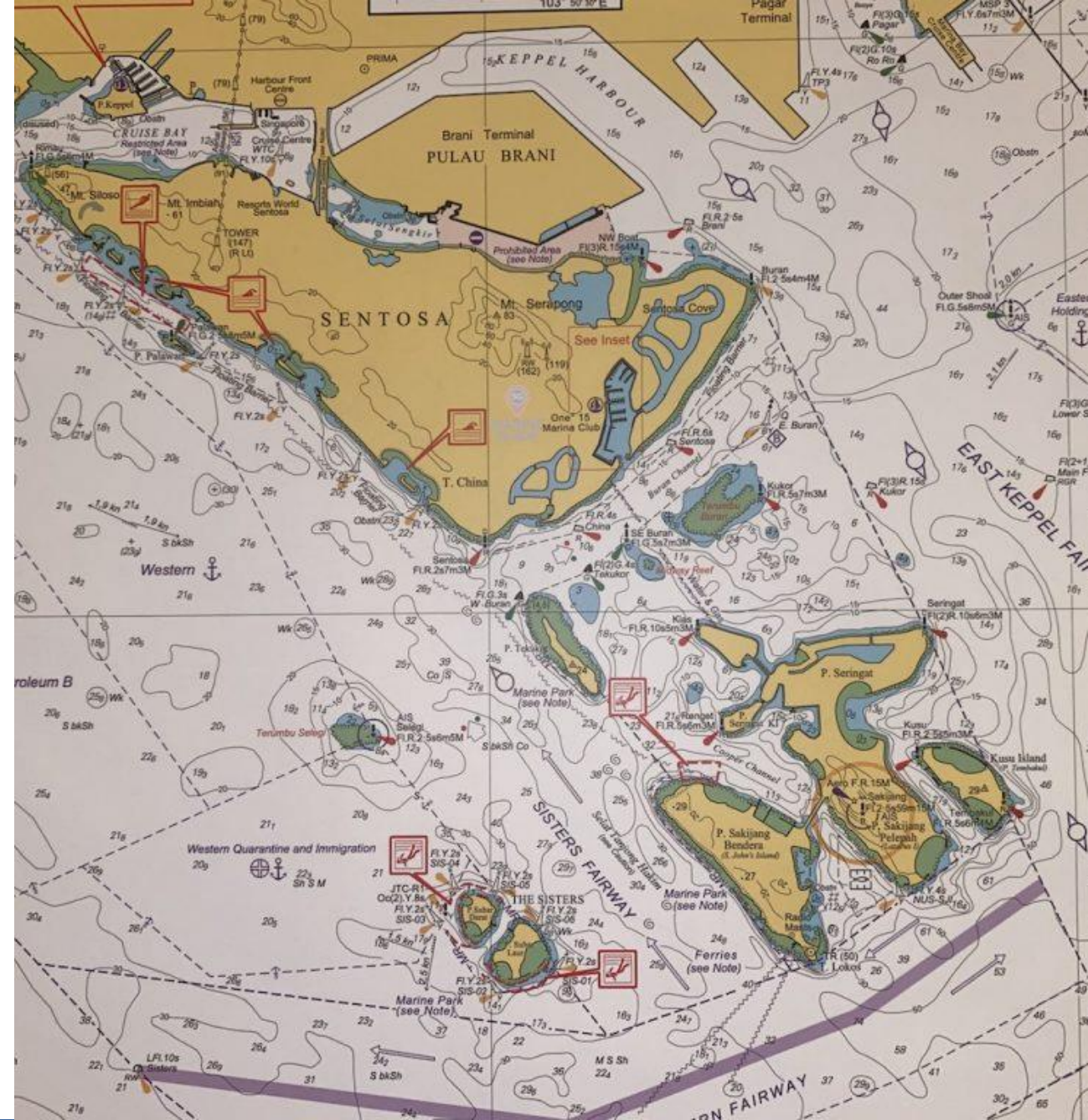
# Common pleasure craft risks

- Weather-related risks
- Sudden storms, squalls, or high winds
- Poor visibility due to fog or heavy rain
- Inaccurate interpretation of forecasts
- Mitigation: Check multiple weather sources, understand local patterns, and plan safe shelter options.



# Common pleasure craft risks

- Navigational Hazards
- Grounding on unmarked shoals or rocks
- Collisions in high-traffic areas or with floating debris
- Poorly maintained or missing navigation aids
- Mitigation: Use updated charts, GPS + visual checks, avoid night-time passage in unfamiliar waters.



# Common pleasure craft risks

- Mechanical & technical failures
- Engine breakdowns
- Steering or electrical system failure
- Dead batteries or fuel issues
- Mitigation: Pre-departure checks, carry spare parts/tools, routine maintenance, backup power.



# Common pleasure craft risks

- Human factors
- Fatigue or inexperience
- Poor communication or crew coordination
- Alcohol or complacency
- Mitigation: Assign roles, brief crew, stay alert, follow safety protocols, never operate impaired.



# Common pleasure craft risks

- Emergency preparedness gaps
- Missing or malfunctioning safety equipment (lifejackets, EPIRB, flares)
- Lack of VHF radio knowledge
- Mitigation: Carry all required safety gear, practice emergency drills.



# Common pleasure craft risks

- Overloading or improper loading
- Excessive passengers or gear
- Poor weight distribution affecting stability
- Mitigation: Respect the vessel's load limits, secure gear properly, avoid sudden weight shifts.



# Common pleasure craft risks

- Operating at night or in low visibility
- Difficulty seeing hazards or identifying other vessels
- Increased risk of disorientation or navigational error
- Mitigation: Use radar / lighting where appropriate, slow down, have a clear lookout, avoid if not necessary.



# The risk assessment process

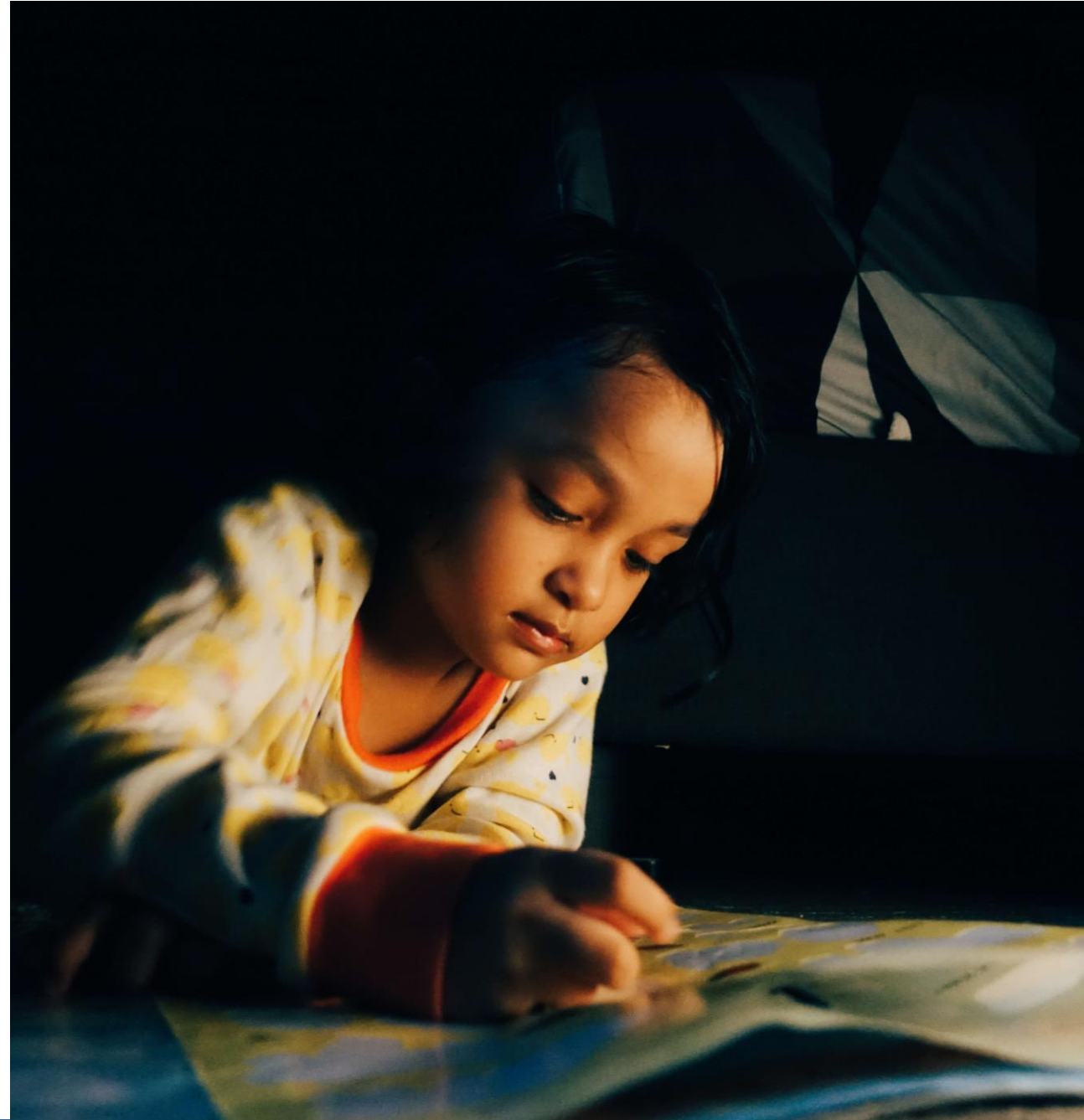
- *“A simple method to think ahead, identify what could go wrong, and take steps to prevent or prepare for it.”*
- 5-step approach to make risk assessment approachable and effective





# Identify the hazards

- Ask: What could go wrong? Look for anything that might cause harm or lead to an incident:
  - Bad weather
  - Shallow waters
  - Equipment failure
  - Fatigued crew
  - High-traffic zones
- Tip: Walk through the planned route and think through each phase — departure, transit, arrival.



# Assess the risks

- Ask: How likely is it to happen and how serious would it be?
- Use a simple risk matrix (Probability vs Impact):
  - Low: Unlikely and minor consequence
  - Medium: Possible and moderate consequence
  - High: Likely or serious consequence
- Focus on high and medium risks – these need action.

Probability

	Low 1	Medium 2	High 3
Low 1	1	2	3
Medium 2	2	4	6
High 3	3	6	9

Impact

# Decide on control measures

- Ask: What can I do to reduce the risk?
- Examples:
  - Avoid sailing during approaching storms
  - Carry spare fuel and tools
  - Brief the crew on roles
  - Set clear waypoints to avoid hazards
- This is where preparation and good seamanship make all the difference.



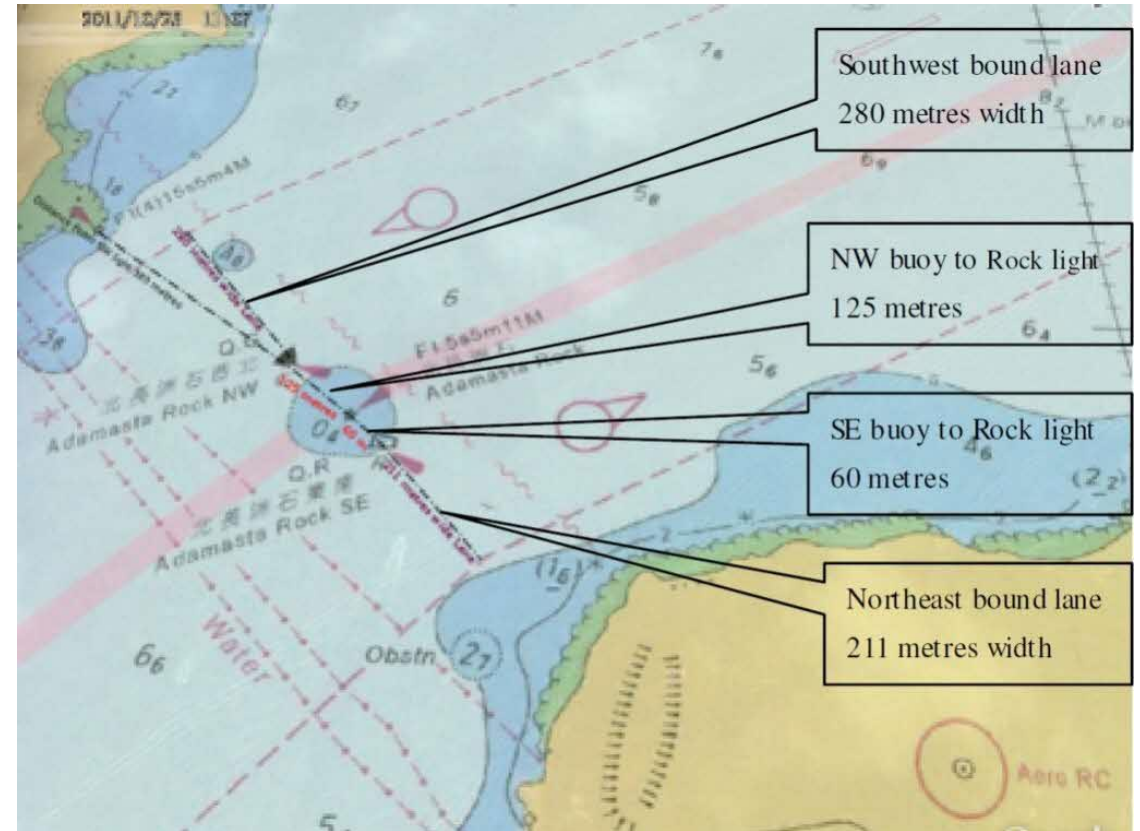
# Record and communicate the plan

- Note down your plan (especially for longer passages)
- Brief your crew (even for small boats)
- Let someone ashore know your voyage plan
- Communication is part of the safety plan – don't skip it.



# Review and adapt during the voyage

- Risk assessment doesn't end when you cast off
- Monitor weather and traffic
- Stay alert for equipment or crew issues
- Be ready to change course or abort the trip if conditions worsen
- A good skipper adapts — risk awareness is continuous.



# Passage Planning Fundamentals (APPROACH)

- A:** Assemble Information
- P:** Prepare Route
- P:** Provisions and Fuel Check
- R:** Risk Assessment
- O:** Observe Rules
- A:** Alternatives & Emergency Plans
- C:** Checklists
- H:** Human Factors

*“Risk assessment is not paperwork – it’s mindset, awareness, and preparation that keeps you and your crew safe.”*



# Loss Prevention publications

- Risk Watch (Operational)
- Crew Watch
- Loss Prevention guidance, updates, circulars, insights, posters

- <https://britanniapandi.com/knowledge/>
- <https://britanniapandi.com/publications/>

**PILOTAGE INTERVENTION**

**PROBE:** ASK QUESTIONS IF YOU ARE CONCERNED

**ALERT:** IF IGNORED, RAISE YOUR CONCERNS

**CHALLENGE:** FORMALLY QUESTION DECISIONS

**EMERGENCY:** TAKE ALTERNATIVE ACTION

**ONBOARD SECURITY**

**STEVEDORE OR STOWAWAY?**

**NO VALID ID. NO ACCESS.**

**KNOW WHO IS COMING ON BOARD!**

**RULE 16 ACTION BY GIVE-WAY VESSEL**

**ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN** DO NOT HESITATE TO TAKE ACTION · MAKE AN EARLY ALTERATION OF COURSE AND / OR SPEED

MAKE BOLD ALTERATIONS · ACTIONS TO BE EVIDENT TO OTHERS

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Every vessel which is directed to keep out of the way of another vessel shall, so far as possible, take early and substantial action to keep well clear.

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