

BRITANNIA LOSS PREVENTION

B GUIDANCE

SEPTEMBER 2025

HIGH COLLISION RISK AREAS

HIGH COLLISION RISK WITH FISHING VESSELS EXPECTED AFTER CHINESE FISHING BAN ENDED IN SOUTH AND EAST CHINA SEAS, YELLOW SEA, AND BOHAI SEA.

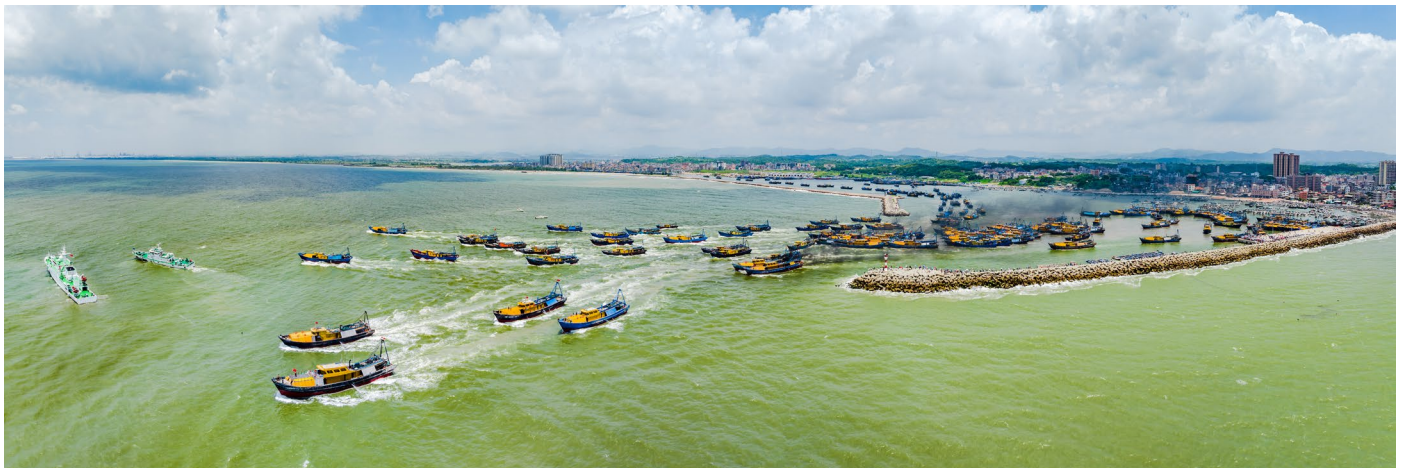
Annual Chinese fishing ban ended on 16 August for the South China Sea, on 1 September for the Bohai Sea and Yellow Sea, and on 15 September for the East China Sea. After the ban lifted, these areas experience the highest density of fishing boats. Master and watchkeeping officers should navigate cautiously due to the expected high traffic density of fishing boats.



ISSUES AND CHALLENGES WHEN NAVIGATING THESE AREAS

COLLISIONS BETWEEN MERCHANT SHIPS AND FISHING VESSELS PREDOMINANTLY OCCUR BETWEEN 23:00 AND 04:00. AT NIGHT, FISHING VESSELS ANCHORED IN THE WATER MAY LACK PROPER WATCHKEEPING, FAIL TO DISPLAY APPROPRIATE NAVIGATION LIGHTS, OR HAVE THEIR AUTOMATIC IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (AIS) TURNED OFF, MAKING THEM DIFFICULT TO DETECT.

Detecting wooden boats in poor weather conditions is particularly challenging due to their weak radar reflections. Fishing vessels traveling at speeds of around three knots are often engaged in fishing operations, which restrict their manoeuvrability. Even minor contact with a merchant ship can result in severe damage or capsizing of the fishing vessel. Additionally, when fishing vessels approach merchant vessels closely, they may exhibit unexpected behaviours, such as sudden speed changes, course shifts, or attempts to cross in front of the merchant vessels. These actions are often driven by the need to protect their nets or adhere to traditional practices.



BEST PRACTICES TO PREVENT COLLISIONS WITH FISHING VESSELS

- **Conduct a thorough voyage risk assessment**
- **Consider fishing grounds in voyage planning:** Account for the spatial distribution of fishing grounds when planning your voyage
- **Bridge team meetings:** Hold bridge team meetings before entering these areas to discuss expected high fishing density, identification of different types of fishing vessels, their lights, shapes, and nets
- **Increase watch levels:** Enhance watchkeeping vigilance in these areas
- **Inspect navigation and communication equipment:** Ensure all equipment is thoroughly inspected and tested
- **Optimise radar use:** Properly tune, adjust and select the appropriate range scale for radars

- **Test steering and propulsion systems:** Ensure these systems are tested and ready for immediate use
- **Engage hand steering:** Switch to hand steering well in advance when approaching clusters of fishing vessels
- **Main engines on manoeuvring RPM:** Ensure the main engines are on manoeuvring RPM
- **Avoid fishing vessel clusters:** Maintain a wide margin to avoid clusters of fishing vessels whenever possible
- **Strict compliance with COLREGs:** Adhere strictly to the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea
- **Navigate with due regard:** When navigating amid a large number of fishing vessels, give due regard to other merchant ships manoeuvring to avoid them, so as not to create a risk of collision with those ships
- **Vigilant watchkeeping:** Monitor for any developing collision risks with fishing vessels, and track their movements as they may change course or speed suddenly
- **Clear communication:** Ensure clear communication between the bridge team, including master, officer of the watch and look outs
- **Use sound signals in restricted visibility**
- **Master's night orders:** The master's night orders should clearly state the expected fishing traffic density and provide instructions on when to call the master to the bridge
- **Signals to attract attention:** Use rapid flashing of an Aldis lamp or rapid blasts of a ship's whistle to alert fishing vessels to the ship's presence and proximity
- **Watch changeovers:** Allow time for new watchkeepers to familiarise themselves with the surrounding fishing traffic, and hand over the watch only after completing any ongoing manoeuvres necessary to avoid a collision
- **Avoid hitting the side in a collision:** If a collision is unavoidable, try to avoid striking the side of the fishing boat with the bow.

SEARCH AND RESCUE, NOT HIT AND RUN

IN THE EVENT OF A COLLISION, THE SHIP SHOULD BE STOPPED IMMEDIATELY TO INITIATE SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS.

All nearby ships should be informed of the incident and the ongoing search and rescue efforts. The collision should also be reported to the nearest coastal state authorities without delay, providing all necessary information.

Master's and watchkeeping officers must exercise increased vigilance when navigating in the South China Sea, East China Sea, Yellow Sea and Bohai Sea due to the high density of fishing vessels. Proactive measures and adherence to best practices are essential to avoid any unfortunate incidents of collisions with fishing vessels. The China Maritime Safety Administration (MSA) has published a [list of 38 high collision risk areas](#) along the Chinese coast.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please do not hesitate to email lossprevention@tindallriley.com.

DISCLAIMER

THIS LOSS PREVENTION GUIDANCE ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED BY THE BRITANNIA STEAM SHIP INSURANCE ASSOCIATION EUROPE (THE ASSOCIATION).

Whilst the information is believed to be correct at the date of publication, the Association cannot, and does not, assume any responsibility for the completeness or accuracy of that information. The content of this publication does not constitute legal advice and Members should always contact the Association for specific advice on a particular matter.