



Safety at night

You, like many other users, may be afloat after dusk and during the hours of darkness whether you're arriving from another port or just enjoying some fishing. As darkness presents its own dangers when navigation in the water way you must ensure that you do everything you can to minimise the risk to yourself and other users. The waterway is completely different at night and you need to alter the way you operate your vessel to suit the conditions, whether at anchor or underway. You must carry and show the correct lights.

Remember when afloat at night or in reduced visibility:

Go slow, be seen and keep a lookout.

Go slow

In darkness, fog or when glare from the sun restricts your visibility, you must slow down to a safe speed. A safe speed is one at which you can stop and avoid a collision, considering the circumstances and conditions at the time.

Remember – the faster you go, the faster you approach hazards and hitting a hazard at speed can have a greater impact on you, your passengers and your boat.

Be seen

You may be able to see others but can they see you? At night, every type of craft on the water needs lights in order to be seen. Whether you are paddling, rowing, sailing or motoring, everyone needs to be able to recognise where you are and what you are doing.

Make sure you have the right lights for your craft and that they work properly. Use them as soon as the sun goes down or when visibility is poor. Your lights should be mounted in a position that gives you optimum night vision and allow others to see you from every direction. Make sure you don't adversely affect your night vision, or the vision of other boat skippers

You should also carry a working waterproof floating torch. It may help others see you if you shine your torch on your sails or superstructure and always check your lights are working before you go leave.

Keep a lookout

You must take particular care when navigating at night or in reduced visibility – it can be like looking into a black hole. Look and listen at all times, as a number of hazards such as logs, moored boats or sandbanks are unlit.

Navigation lights may not be as bright as other lights and background lights may hide something that is closer. If it is a large ship, the lights might be high and you may not realise that you are looking at the sides of a black hull.

If you have the slightest doubt, stop, ensure you are lit and have a good look around you.

Navigation marks can help you navigate safely in the waterway. Navigation marks often indicate where hazards are, but should be coupled with reference to a map or chart and use of local knowledge of the area, particularly in the dark.