

Recreational boaters urged to steer clear of ships

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With the summer months approaching and more recreational boats expected to be on the water, Fremantle Ports has warned boat owners to take care around shipping.

Acting Harbour Master Captain Stuart Davey said summer was a great time for boat owners, but with the sheer number of boats passing through the Fremantle Inner Harbour and port waters it could also become a potentially dangerous time.

‘Ships visiting Fremantle are up to 150,000 tonnes; they cannot stop or change course quickly and they are often travelling faster than you think,’ he said.

‘The most important thing to remember is to give them plenty of room and steer clear.’

Captain Davey said it was vital to understand that crew on a large container ship or cruise ship had restricted views of the waterways from the ship’s bridge.

‘Crew on the largest ships often cannot see waters more than 300 metres directly in front of their ship, so a small boat might not even be visible to them.’

He said recreational skippers had to always move with caution, keep a good look out and if possible, monitor radio channels (Emergency Channel 88).

He also warned about the danger of moving in front of large vessels: ‘Crossing in front of an approaching container ship, or any ship, is a very bad idea. You might have an engine failure or if you are on a sailing craft, the wind could suddenly drop and you would be in trouble.’

Skippers are required to maintain a proper look-out which will help avoid the risk of collision.

Fremantle Port operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and there are more than 3,500 shipping movements annually in the Fremantle Inner Harbour, the approach channels and Cockburn Sound.

It is vitally important that shipping and boat users safely navigate the port’s 383 square kilometres of water.

Captain Davey said under the *Port Authorities Act 1999* the Harbour Master had considerable powers to control vessels in harbour waters and would do so if necessary.

‘We understand most boat owners try to do the right thing, but with summer coming we want to remind everyone of the risks and consequences of obeying the rules.’

More information: <https://www.fremantleports.com.au/the-port/port-safety/recreational-boat-users>

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