

ANNOUNCEMENT OF UPDATE TO NOTE: *CAUTION REQUIRED WHEN NAVIGATING IN ARCTIC WATERS*

On 6 March, 2026, the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC) and the Arctic Council's Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) jointly issued an update of a note, *Caution Required when Navigating in Arctic Waters*, initially published exclusively by the ARHC in 2017.

The updated note warns mariners about ongoing data limitations and risks associated with marine navigation in the Arctic despite advancements in hydrographic surveying and charting in the region. These limitations and risks, along with rapid changes in the Arctic and increasing vessel traffic are the impetus for the reissuance of the note.

The updated note incorporates several important shifts in focus as compared to the 2017 note. Substantive changes include:

- **Greater Recognition of Rapid Arctic Changes:** an explicit reference to 'a rapidly changing Arctic' along with new Arctic maritime routes and increasing vessel traffic.
- **Enhanced Reporting Recommendation:** mariners are now encouraged to promptly report uncharted dangers and chart discrepancies to national hydrographic offices.
- **References to Training Standards:** new references to the *International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers* (STCW Convention) due to the importance for Arctic navigational safety.
- **Emphasis on S-100 and Modern Digital Standards:** specific references to the International Maritime Organization (IMO)'s authorization of the use of S-100 capable Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) starting in 2026, but a caution that even with these state-of-the-art products, the underlying hydrographic data may still be incomplete or lacking.
- **Voyage Planning:** an expanded scope to reference additional voyage planning requirements and best practices.

The 2026 note is copied below. Please circulate within your networks and incorporate or encourage others to incorporate the guidance this note provides into your best practices, where appropriate.

Sincerely,

Abidat Magomedova  
Chair of PAME

Manon Larocque  
Chair of ARHC



## CAUTION REQUIRED WHEN NAVIGATING IN ARCTIC WATERS

**Updated March 6, 2026**

*A Joint Advisory from the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission and the Arctic Council's Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment*

The [Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission](#) (ARHC) and the Arctic Council's Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) advise caution when navigating in Arctic waters.

Despite advancements in hydrographic surveying and charting in the region, ongoing limitations and risks associated with marine navigation, compounded by a rapidly changing Arctic including the opening of new potential maritime routes and [increasing vessel traffic](#), are the impetus for issuing this updated notice.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) allows S-100-capable Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) on [SOLAS](#) ships beginning in 2026 (Resolution MSC.530(106)/Rev. 1(2024)). In the near future, vessels may become increasingly reliant on state-of-the-art products and services meeting the [IHO S-100 Standards](#) or other digital navigational tools. However, despite ongoing progress, substantial areas of the Arctic still lack modern hydrographic data regardless of whether the chosen official navigational method is paper or digital. Challenges with digital communication technology, modern surveys, and predictability of ice coverage limit availability and reliability of Electronic Navigation Charts (ENCs) and S-100 products and services in the Arctic.

Navigating outside areas supported by modern or adequate survey data, or without thorough voyage planning, ice experience, considering relevant local knowledge, or taking other precautions can result in the loss of human life and damage to property and the environment.

The [International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters \(Polar Code\)](#) and Regulation V/4 of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers provide an international set of safety, crew training, and environmental standards. Following these standards helps to mitigate the risks associated with ships operating in hazard-prone areas of the Arctic and ensures that mariners are sufficiently experienced. Mariners must plan well in advance of any prospective voyages, review emergency procedures, understand their operating environment where conditions can change rapidly and vary seasonally, assess survival equipment and determine necessary risk control measures, and be familiar with the quality of navigational services and nautical charts along their planned routes.

While the safety of Arctic navigation continues to improve through the collective efforts of mariners, regulatory bodies, and national hydrographic offices, the Arctic remains a complex and potentially dangerous area for mariners to navigate. Mariners are encouraged to promptly report uncharted dangers, chart discrepancies, and other relevant navigational observations to the national hydrographic office responsible for charting in their navigational area of interest.