

8th CSPCWG Meeting
Turku, Finland, 29 November – 2 December 2011

Paper for Consideration by CSPCWG
Submarine Cables issued by NM

Submitted by:	UK
Executive Summary:	How to maintain charts for new submarine telecommunication cables.
Related Documents:	IHO Specs S-4 B443, B620.3i and C-408
Related Projects:	None

Introduction / Background.

UKHO has received an increased number of complaints/concerns from external sources about damage to submarine telecommunication cables from vessels anchoring, fishing, etc. They are not generally a safety issue, even though many telecommunication cables carry high voltages, as the cable tends to break easily rather than snag the anchor. However, any breaks have an impact on international communications, are expensive to repair and may result in heavy fines for the vessel involved.

Analysis / Discussion.

S-4 B620.3i recommends NM action for:

‘vulnerable (ie insufficiently buried, see B-443.8 and B-444.5) submarine cables and pipelines to a depth of 200 metres, although this should be flexible for some geographical areas where it is known that there is seabed activity at greater depths.

The proliferation of submarine cables places a heavy chart maintenance burden on hydrographic offices and on chart users.

UK would be very interested to hear how other HOs cope with maintaining charts for new cables, inside and outside their national waters.

In response to a request from Spain, the option to add the destination name to a cable was added to S-4 B443. This may be a way to indicate that a cable continues beyond its charted end, but does not give the mariner any more information relating to the course of the cable. Therefore it would not lessen the risk of snagging a cable.

Another suggestion is to add an arrow to indicate a cable continues beyond 40m. However, an arrow would only state the obvious. It could possibly lead the mariner to believe the cable carries on in exactly the direction the arrow points to, without giving him any more information of the course of the cable.

Conclusions.

None

Recommendations.

None

Justification and Impacts.

The heavy burden on maintaining charts for the increasing number of telecommunication cables needs controlling. However, this must be without detriment to the safety of the mariner and ideally provide adequate protection to cables.

Action required of CSPCWG.

The CSPCWG is invited to:

Discuss practices and experiences, as well as advise on the above matter.