

ENCs or alternative official products for leisure craft and fishing boats

— Status in Finland

[5 September 2011]

Introduction

The FHO have put a lot of efforts during last four years for ENC production and have built an adequate ENC portfolio (ENC coverage) for ECDIS systems of SOLAS ships. At the same time commercial providers have produced great variety of ECSs for leisure crafts and other non ECDIS equipped vessels. Some providers use unencrypted S-57 supplied by HO's for their ECS while some providers use unaudited data from HO's database but there are few providers still digitizing paper charts which evidently mean lower quality and inaccuracy of the data.

The result of progress is that there are no standard based, certified or audited (official) digital chart products for leisure craft, fishing boats or other non ECDIS equipped vessels.

It is not known by clients or even authorities how up to date the data in these unofficial chart products are. We believe that ECS providers provide no more frequent than one year update cycle of the data in their products and updating will be done by replacing of the whole chart or chart set.

A major cause of concern is modification of the depth data. It is noticed that some ECS contain now 3D depth model which is promoted as the most accurate data despite the fact that the source data is still the same than delivered from FHO. In Finnish ENCs and printed charts there are areas with different CATZOC attributes existing and available for navigators.

Even more alarming, interpolation of depth data has been made by some commercial providers obviously to have full coverage of depth model. In the original data sets from FHO there are quite a number of areas where depth data are lacking totally. These areas can be identified on official ENCs and printed products.

The FHO have not taken any liability on those ECSs but obviously the end users seem to consider the products as reliable as official products published by hydrographic offices.

Would it be reasonable to HO's to take this market sector in their scope and consider

- is there a need for a standard for official digital charts for leisure craft, fishing boats and other non ECDIS equipped vessels?
- should HO's provide audited i.e. official digital chart products for non ECDIS vessels?

Actions for the BSHC 16th Conference:

The BSHC 16th Conference is requested to

- take note on this information and
- take actions as seen appropriately