Bothnia VTS

About Vessel Traffic Services

The provisions on vessel traffic services are laid down in the Vessel Traffic Service Act 623/2005 and in the Government Decrees on Vessel Traffic Service 763/2005, 1798/2009, 1304/2011, 1216/2018 and 93/2024.

Participation in Vessel Traffic Services

Vessels of 24 metres in length overall or more are obliged to participate in the vessel traffic services.
When navigating in the VTS area, vessels are required to maintain a continuous listening watch on the working channel used in the area. Furthermore, vessels are obliged to obey the rules relevant to the traffic in the VTS area. More detailed instructions about the required reports and working channels can be found in the regional VTS guide.
Vessels navigating in the VTS area, which are not obliged to participate in the vessel traffic services, are recommended to maintain a listening watch on the working channel in the VTS area or sector in question.

Operational hours and location of VTS Centres

In Finland the vessel traffic services (VTS services) are operated by Fintraffic Vessel Traffic Services Ltd (Fintraffic VTS). VTS centres are located in Turku and Helsinki. The sea areas at the Finnish coast are divided into six VTS areas. These are Bothnia VTS, West Coast VTS, Archipelago VTS, Hanko VTS, Helsinki VTS and Kotka VTS. In addition, Saimaa VTS operates in the Saimaa deep water fairway.
Along the coast VTS services are provided 24 h/day throughout the year. There may be operational interruptions due to technical problems or an unexpected shortage of personnel. Information about the interruptions is given as navigational or local warnings. Saimaa VTS only provides services during its period of operations. The period of operations is largely equivalent to the opening hours of the Saimaa Canal, but Fintraffic VTS will provide information about when the operational period begins and ends.

Service and languages

Vessel Traffic Service includes providing information, responding to developing unsafe situations, and organizing traffic.
To improve safety and to create a consistent maritime situational awareness, English is used as the primary communication language in the VTS areas along the Finnish coast. As required, vessel traffic service is also provided in Finnish and Swedish.

Information
is given to all vessels whenever necessary, at set intervals, when they report or when a vessel so requests. The information to vessels comprises matters which affect the vessels' safe and smooth navigation. Such information includes, among other things, traffic in the VTS area, weather conditions, pilotage, icebreaking, towage, and port operations, as well as information on the status of navigational aids and fairways. VTS monitors the movement of vessels and, if necessary, provides information to the vessel about a developing unsafe situation.

Responding to developing unsafe situations:
Identified vessels are assisted in navigation upon request or when deemed necessary by the VTS.
Navigational assistance may include information about the vessel's position and bearings/courses over ground to for example the fairway centre line or the pilot boarding position. Bearings or COG's can also be given so that vessels can pass navigational hazards, for example shoals, at a safe distance.
Assistance is advisory and normative in nature. The responsibility for navigating the vessel remains with the vessel's master.
The information, warnings, advice, and instructions provided by the VTS are based the situational awareness system at the VTS center.

Vessel traffic is organized
in order to improve traffic flow and safety. Methods of organization include, among others, permanent meeting and overtaking prohibition areas, departure procedures for ports, and traffic organization based on time or distance. The aim is to prevent dangerous meeting and overtaking situations and congestion.

Contact information

Emergency number in Finland

Emergency number in Finland
112

Only call the emergency number 112 in real emergencies when you need urgent assistance from the authorities.

Maritime Rescue Centres

National Maritime Search and Rescue alarm number
VHF 16 / DSC 70 / MF-DSC 2187,5 kHz
Alarm hotline +358 294 1000

Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre MRCC Turku
VHF 16 / DSC 70 / MF-DSC 2187,5 kHz
mrcc@raja.fi
Alarm hotline +358 294 1001

Maritime Rescue Subcentre MRSC Helsinki
VHF 16 / DSC 70 / MF-DSC 2187,5 kHz
mrsc.helsinki@raja.fi
Alarm hotline +358 294 1002

Bothnia VTS

Bothnia VTS
VHF 67
bothnia.vts@fintraffic.fi
+358 20 448 7356

Western Finland Vessel Traffic Centre Supervisor
supervisors.west@fintraffic.fi
+358 20 448 6522

All phone calls will be recorded.

Bothnia VTS Ports

Port of Tornio
VHF 12
agency.tornio@outokumpu.com
Outokumpu Agency +358 16 4545 11

Port of Kemi Port Security
VHF 12
satamavalvojat@keminsatama.fi
+358 40 548 2065

Port of Oulu Port Control
VHF 12
satamavalvojat@ouluport.com
+358 44 703 2759

Raahe Port Service
VHF 12
portservice@raahe.fi
+358 40 356 6209

Raahe Port
Emergency contact point
+358 40 135 6794

Port of Kokkola Port Control
VHF 12
satamavalvojat@portofkokkola.fi
+358 400 432694

Pietarsaari Port Control
VHF 16 & 13
portcontrol@portofpietarsaari.fi
+358 6 723 1388

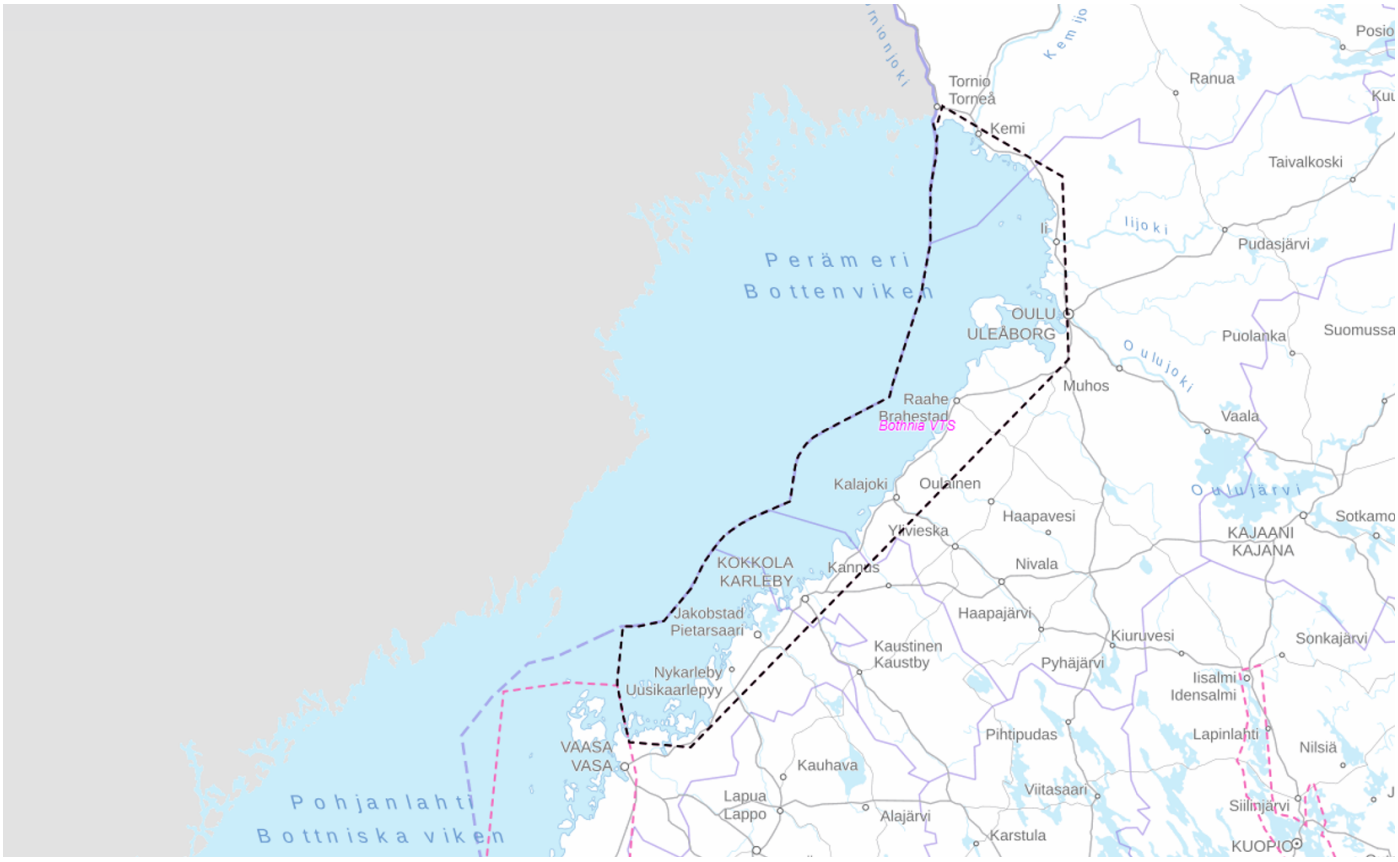
Kalajoki Port Service and ISPS
VHF 12
portservice@portofkalajoki.fi
+358 400 798 698

Pilot Dispatch Bothnia Area

Pilot Dispatch Bothnia Area
pilotdispatch.bothnia@finnpilot.fi
+358 29 5253 440

Get familiar with Bothnia VTS area

The VTS Area covers the coast along the Bay of Bothnia from Ritgrund lighthouse to Tornio including the merchant shipping lanes as well as the areas administered by the Port of Pietarsaari and Port of Oulu. The VTS Area does not cover the areas administered by other ports.
The boundary line of the Bothnia VTS Area runs between the following corner points:
1) from Ritgrund lighthouse, 63°25.5'N 021°30.5'E
2) to the territorial sea limit in position 63°40.0’N 021°31.0’E
3) observing the territorial sea limit to Tornio



Bothnia VTS Area Info

Reporting procedures

The working channel of Bothnia VTS is VHF 67.

Reports should include the following information:

- Name of the vessel
- Name of reporting point

- Destination
- Intended route. If an alternative route is selected, this must be reported.

Required reports

- upon entry into the VTS Area
- before anchoring
- before leaving an anchorage
- after berthing
- before leaving port; for Port of Pietarsaari and Port of Oulu, see chapter “Permission to depart from the ports of Pietarsaari and Oulu”

Vessels bound for Finnish ports in the Gulf of Bothnia via the Quark are required to submit an advance report 20 nautical miles before the Nordvalen Lighthouse (63°32.15’N 020°46.60’E) at the time indicated in the instructions Finland's Winter Navigation.

Departure permissions

Before leaving the Port of Oulu or Port of Pietarsaari, the vessel must request permission to depart from VTS.
The permission to depart issued by the VTS is valid for 20 minutes, during which time the vessel must get underway.
The vessel is required to give a report when underway. If the vessel’s departure is delayed, it will have to request a new permission to depart.
In the Port of Pietarsaari, if necessary, the order of departure and arrival can be decided by the Port Authority.

Meeting and overtaking prohibitions

Meeting and overtaking is permanently prohibited in the following areas covered by Bothnia VTS:

1.
Tornio
: Harbour basin - buoy pair T27 and T28 between 65º 44,8’ N and 65º 43,2’ N in Tornio–Röyttä fairway.
2.

Tornio
: Europa bend, between edge mark Europa and buoy T18 between latitudes 60º 39,8’ N and 60º 40,4’ N in Tornio–Röyttä fairway.
3.

Tornio
: Narrow passage at Keila, between T5 and T7 between longitudes 024º 20,8’ E and 021º 18,9’ E in Tornio–Röyttä fairway.
4.

Kemi
: Ajos Harbour - buoy Inakari 1 between latitudes 65º 39,2’ N and 65º 38,6’ N in Kemi–Ajos fairway.
5.

Kemi
: Buoys Ke 5 – Inakari 1 between latitudes 65° 35,9′ N and 65° 38,6′ N in Kemi–Ajos fairway. Applies only to meeting and overtaking situations in which at least one of the vessels has a maximum length of at least 200 meters.
6.

Kemi
: Veitsiluoto Harbour - W of Ajoskrunni between latitudes 65º 40,9’ N and 65º 37,8’ N in Veitsiluoto fairway.
7.

Oulu
: Suumatala, buoy Oulu 5 – edge mark Hammasmatala between longitudes 024º 50,5’ E and 024º 53,1’ E in Oulu 1–Kattilankalla fairway.
8.

Oulu
: Löyhänmutka fairway area between Hookana and Löyhänmutka edge mark between latitudes 65º 07,3’ N and 65º 06,8’ N in Oulu–Kemi fairway.
9.

Oulu
: Port entrance, Kyrönkari - Port of Oulu between longitudes 025º 20,8’ E and 025º 23,5’ E in Oulu fairway.
10.

Oulu
: Buoy pairs O5 and O6 - O9 and O10 between longitudes 024° 45,0′ E and 024° 47,6′ E in Oulu fairway.
11.

Raahe
: Elkonredi - Johan edge mark between longitudes 024º 22,3’ E and 024º 16,9’ E in Raahe fairway.
12.

Kalajoki
: Buoy Ulkopauha – harbour border between latitudes 64º 14,7' N and 64º 13,6' N in Kalajoki-Rahja fairway.
13.

Kokkola
: Radar mark Pietarinkanta – buoy pair K 12 and K 13 between latitudes 63º 59,8’ N and 63º51,9’ N in Kokkola fairway. Applies only to meeting and overtaking situations in which at least one of the vessels has a maximum length of at least 200 meters.
14.

Kokkola
: Buoy pair Bagdamatala and Taulukari E – buoy pair Aallonmurt LÄ and Fasadi between latitudes 63° 51,7' N and 63° 51,2’ E in Kokkola Kantasatama fairway.
15.

Pietarsaari
: Kallan, Buoys Pietarsaari 1 – Pietarsaari 3 between longitudes 022° 30,9′ E and 022° 32,2′ E in Pietarsaari fairway.
16.

Pietarsaari
: Port of Pietarsaari - Ådö island between longitudes 022º 41,0’ E and 022º 37,9’ E in Pietarsaari fairway.
The meeting and overtaking prohibition areas do not apply to tugs when they are assisting within the meeting and overtaking prohibition area, or to vessels performing icebreaking assistance.

Safety zones

Vessel Traffic Service can organize traffic in order to prevent danger situations and congestion based on time or distance within its area of operation. The organization arrangement can be based on traffic conditions, such as congestion, a special transport, or other factors that limit or endanger traffic.

On Tornio Röyttä fairway, traffic is organized with 1 NM safety zones for special transports (LNG carriers). Other vessels are not allowed to enter the safety zone without VTS permission when using the same fairway.
The safety zones are activated through a VTS radio announcement on the VTS area’s working channel.

Speed limits

1. In Oulu the 12.5 m fairway has a 12 kn (22 km/h) speed limit between longitudes 025°12,2’E and 025°06,0’E.

Anchoring

A vessel must always notify both the VTS and the Finnish Border Guard when anchoring in Finland's territorial waters. The vessel must make the notification either itself or through its agent. In addition, a vessel anchoring in territorial waters is required to make an electronic customs declaration, even if the vessel is not going to call at a Finnish port.

After leaving a port in Finland, the vessel must also check with the Finnish Border Guard whether anchoring in Finnish territorial waters is possible. Also in this case, a vessel remaining at anchor must make an electronic customs declaration.

Aids to Navigation

1. Remotely operated AtoNs

Upon request, VTS can:

- switch on the virtual AIS marks between the Oulu 12,5 m fairway and the pilot boarding position.
- adjust the brightness of aids to navigation in the Kokkola 14 m fairway.

2. Permanent Virtual AtoNs (V-AIS)

There are no permanent V-AIS-AtoNs in the Bothnia VTS area.

3. Fault Reporting

AtoNs not working correctly? Please inform Bothnia VTS by VHF radio on channel 67 or call Turku Radio 0800-181818.

Notice of channel use

Use of channels that deviates from the channel design refers to a situation where a vessel uses a channel in a manner that deviates from the channel's design and the adequacy of the channel space cannot be ensured based on the design. If the vessel's static draught is greater than the channel's design draught taking into account the current water level, the vessel shall ensure that her net under keel clearance remains adequate and demonstrate it to the VTS Centre that is responsible for monitoring the fairway.

Vessel's operator, agent or master shall give the notice of channel use at least 24 hours before its arrival at the pilot boarding position, or if the vessel is expected to arrive in less than 24 hours, no later than when the vessel has left the port of departure for a Finnish port. A vessel departing a Finnish port shall give the notice of channel use as soon as possible, at latest when the departure report is given.

The notice of channel use shall include the following items:

1. Ship identification details
2. The channel or channel section the ship intends to use in a manner deviating from the channel design
3. Planned control measures for maintaining the net underkeel clearance
4. Length between perpendiculars and maximum breadth (LBP, Breadth)
5. Static draught
6. Centre of buoyancy (KB)
7. Centre of gravity (KG)
8. Metacentric height (GM)
9. Block coefficient (Cb)
10. Individual underkeel clearance calculation based on the information above

When ensuring the adequate net UKC and giving the notice of channel use, it is recommended to utilize the tools provided by the Finnish Transport and Infrastructure Agency. The notice of channel use can be given in the form of a squat calculation made with the Squat Calculator with regard to items D–I. The calculation can be shared as a link, or as a pdf-printout sent by e-mail to the VTS Centre. When using the Squat Calculator, it is enough to write the information of points 1.–3. in the e-mail.

Special situations

The notification obligation will be considered fulfilled in a situation where:

1) a deck officer on board the ship has a valid Pilot Exemption Certificate (PEC) issued in compliance with section 39 of the Pilotage Act (561/2023) that grants an exemption from compulsory pilotage for both the channel and the ship in question; and
2) underkeel clearance calculations that cover the prevailing conditions have been prepared for the ship and the channel in question; and
3) the ship in question operates in the relevant channel in a scheduled service referred to in section 2, subsection 1, paragraph 28 of the Vessel Traffic Service Act.

Sending the notice

In Archipelago VTS, Bothnia VTS, Saimaa VTS and West Coast VTS monitoring areas the notice of channel use should be sent to the email address supervisors.west@fintraffic.fi. Title the email “Notice of channel use”.

Harbour areas

Oulu

Vessels are required to maintain a listening watch on VHF channel 12 in the harbour area. Ship services are ordered from the Port of Oulu. The port regulations and the port instructions of the Port of Oulu must be followed in the area.

Port control contact information:

- telephone +358 (0)44 703 2759
- e-mail satamavalvojat@ouluport.com
- VHF channel 12

Pietarsaari
The port regulations and the port instructions of the Port of Pietarsaari must be followed in the area.
Port control contact information:

- telephone +358 6 723 1388 (24/7)
- e-mail portcontrol@portofpietarsaari.fi
- VHF channel 16 & 13 (not monitored continuously, only during mooring and unmooring)

Pilot boarding positions

- Kalajoki
  64°15.50′N 023°30.00′E
- Kemi N
  65°33.10′N 024°26.90′E
- Kemi S
  65°29.28′N 024°19.02′E
- Kokkola
  64°00.53′N 022°49.09′E
- Oulu N
  65°10.95′N 024°18.00′E
- Oulu S
  65°05.64′N 024°15.40′E
- Oulu W
  65°05.00′N 023°53.50′E
- Pietarsaari
  63°44.66′N 022°27.56′E
- Raahe
  64°38.70′N 024°09.90′E

Accidents and incidents

Accidents and incidents

In coastal areas vessels involved in an accident or in imminent danger shall first contact the MRCC or MRSC (tel. +358 294 1000).

Vessels must immediately report all accidents and incidents relating to maritime safety to the VTS centre. Some examples of such accidents and incidents are listed in section 23 in the Finnish Vessel Traffic Service Act.

Exceptional situations

In exceptional situations, such as extraordinary weather conditions, search and rescue situations or any other incidents in which vessel traffic is restricted or put at risk, the VTS can temporarily close a fairway or fairway section, issue speed limits or instruct vessels to anchor.

Unable to participate?

If the master of the vessel, for a valid reason relating to the vessel’s safety, is unable to participate in the vessel traffic services, or to follow the instructions given by the VTS in exceptional situations, he must immediately inform the VTS about this.

The vessel’s participation in the vessel traffic services does not affect the master’s responsibility for manoeuvring the vessel.