Saimaa 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

Saimaa VTS

Saimaa VTS
VHF 9 / 16
saimaa.vts@fintraffic.fi
+358 20 637 3745

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

Saimaa VTS is responsible for distress and safety radio communication on VHF CH 16 during the Saimaa VTS navigation season.

All phone calls will be recorded.

Saimaa VTS Ports

Mustola, Port of Lappeenranta
mustola.portti@lappeenranta.fi
+358 50 382 88 44

Saimaa VTS Canals and bridges

Saimaa Canal: Mälkiä remote control centre
VHF 11
+ 358 295 34 4157 / + 358 295 34 4158

Saimaa Canal: Brusnitšnoje Lock, (Juustila)
VHF 11
+ 358 295 34 4159

Taipale Canal
VHF 11
+ 358 295 34 4156

Konnus Canal
VHF 11
+ 358 295 34 4156

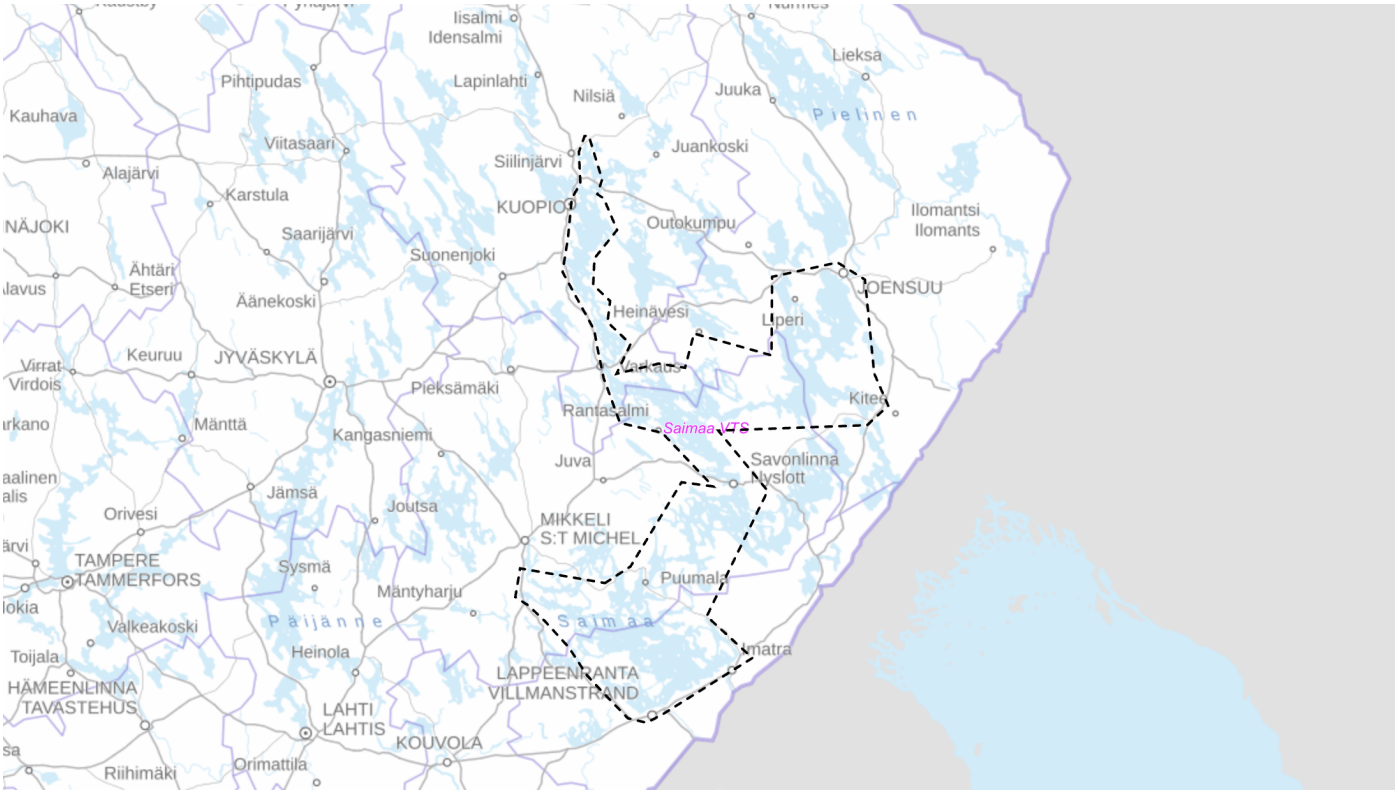
Vihtakanta bridge
VHF 11
+ 358 295 34 4156

Pilot Dispatch Saimaa Area

Pilot Dispatch Saimaa Area
pilotdispatch.saimaa@finnpilot.fi
+358 29 5253 480

Get familiar with Saimaa VTS area

Saimaa VTS Area covers the deep fairways of the Lake Saimaa area and begins from the mouth of Saimaa Canal. Saimaa Canal is not included in the VTS Area.



Saimaa VTS Area Info

Reporting procedures

The working channel of Saimaa VTS is VHF 9.

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.
- Length of tow

Departure report:

Vessels arriving to Lake Saimaa shall submit a departure report upon departure from Mälkiä lock.

Required reports:

- upon entry into the VTS area
- when leaving the VTS area
- before anchoring
- before leaving an anchorage
- after berthing
- before leaving port/lock
- at the reporting points in the area, see the reporting points below

Reporting points,
10 minutes before passing the following places:

1. **Kuhaluoto**
   , southbound
2. **Vekaransalonsalmi**
3. **Hätinvirta**
4. **Puumalansalmi**
5. **Pahikka**
6. **Vekaransalmi**
7. **Härkinsalo**
   , northbound
8. **Kommersalmi**
   , southbound
9. **Laitaatsalmi**
10. **Matarinsalmi**
11. **Haponlahden kaivanto**
    , northbound
12. **Sorsavirta**
    , when arriving from the direction of Joensuu

13. **Virtasaari**
    , when arriving from the direction of Varkaus
14. **Tappuvirta**
15. **Tahkosalmi**
16. **Sinikonniemi**
    , southbound
17. **Muuraispuro**
    , northbound
18. **Patasalmi**
    , northbound
19. **Kolikon kaivanto**
    , southbound
20. **Kortesalmi**
    , northbound
21. **Aittoluoto**
    , southbound
22. **Hanhivirta**
23. **Vihtakanta**

    - in case a vessel using deep water route wants Saimaa VTS to order the opening of the bridge, the vessel must report to Saimaa VTS 30 min before passing it; in this case the 10 minute report in Vihtakanta is not required

24. **Vuosalmi**
    , northbound
25. **Vuoharju**
    , southbound

Vessels towing timber rafts are an exception to the above. These should report to the VTS when approaching the above-mentioned narrow passages so far in advance that the towage can be interrupted before the narrow passage, due to for example a vessel in distress or some other obstruction.

Speed limits

1. Haponlahti Canal

- 9 km/h when vessel’s draught exceeds 3,5 m
- 13 km/h when vessel’s draught is 3,5 m or less

2. Laitaatsalmi 15 km/h
3. Kaukaanselkä 9 km/h
4. Vihtakanta 9 km/h
5. Kortesalmi 9 km/h
6. Pitkälänniemi 9 km/h
7. Pussilantaipale

- 9 km/h when vessel’s draught exceeds 3,5 m
- 13 km/h when vessel’s draught is 3,5 m or less

8. Muuraispuro Canal

- 13 km/h when proceeding southbound and downstream
- 9 km/h in other cases

9. Leppävirta 15 km/h
10. Rahasalmi 9 km/h

In addition, there are speed limits in the harbour areas presented in the port regulations.

Aids to Navigation

1. Automatic and remotely operated AtoNs
The Haponlahti-Heinsalmi fairway section features Aids to Navigation with automatic brightness adjustment based on prevailing visibility conditions and the presence of AIS traffic (Class A) in the area. Automatic adjustment is only available in the dark and can only increase the light output of the aids to navigation beyond their nominal intensity. Visibility is measured using a visibility sensor placed on the Vihtakanta bridge. There may be wide local variations in visibility conditions, so the information provided by the visibility sensor does not necessarily represent visibility throughout the entire fairway. Upon request, Saimaa VTS can also manually adjust the brightness of the Aids to Navigation:

- in the Haponlahti-Heinsalmi fairway, and;
- in the Laitaatsalmi fairway section.

2. Permanent Virtual AtoNs (V-AIS)
There are following permanent V-AIS-AtoNs in the Saimaa VTS area:

- Kalliomatala 61° 37,68'N 028° 33,22'E

3. Fault Reporting
AtoNs not working correctly? Please inform Saimaa VTS by VHF radio on channel 9 or call Turku Radio 0800-181818.

Anchoring
There are no official anchorages in the Saimaa VTS area.

Canals and bridges
Saimaa Canal: Mälkiä remote control centre

- VHF 11
- + 358 295 34 4157
- + 358 295 34 4158

Saimaa Canal: Brusnitšnoje Lock (Juustila)

- VHF 11
- + 358 295 34 4159

Taipale Canal

- VHF 11
- + 358 295 34 4156

Konnus Canal

- VHF 11
- + 358 295 34 4156

Vihtakanta Bridge

- VHF 11
- + 358 295 34 4156

Pilotage

Pilot Boarding Positions

- Haapavesi
  61°53.97′N 028°49.40′E
- Mälkiä
  61°4.26′N 028°18.23′E
- Puumala
  61°31.37′N 028°10.20′E
- Simuna
  61°50.90′N 028°52.30′E
- Taipale canal
  62°18.19′N 027°54.61′E
- Vuokala
  62°9.37′N 029°12.30′E

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”.

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).

In the Lake Saimaa region vessels shall contact the emergency response centre (tel. 112) or the VTS centre.

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.