

M2033

Posted on 06.12.2022 by Adam Parnell

Category: [Maritime](#)

Report Title Collision between power driven vessel and yacht narrowly avoided

Initial Report

Our reporter writes “We were sailing in our yacht, with a flat sea, light wind, and perfect visibility, making about 4 knots on a course of 132° degrees. A very large motorboat came into view dead ahead several miles away and continued towards us on a reciprocal course. We watched this motorboat very carefully as it came closer, mainly because its bow pointed directly at us.

As it came closer, it showed no sign of changing course, even though it was motoring, and we were sailing. When it was just a few seconds away, we started our engine and made a 90 degree course change to starboard to avoid being run down by it. We do not doubt that, had we not started our engine and turned out of its way, it would have run us down.

Our AIS receiver gave the vessel’s name and showed a speed of 12.9 knots. The motor cruiser is a 50-meter-long vessel. We called the vessel on VHF Channel 16 and immediately received a response. We said ‘we are the yacht off your stern that has just had to alter course to avoid being run down by you’. The radio operator on the motor cruiser said three times that they had not seen us and seemed to be completely unaware of our presence or that they had nearly run us down.”

Comment

The power-driven vessel (PDV) should have maintained a proper lookout to “Make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision” and then taken action under rule 18 to “keep out of the way of” the yacht. The yacht correctly took action to avoid collision by her manoeuvre alone (rule 17). However, the moment it started its engine it too became a PDV and thus this manoeuvre was anyway required under rule 14 (head on situations).

Both vessels had an obligation under rule 2 to ‘comply with the ordinary practice of seamen’ which, in layman’s terms, means to always use common sense. Although the yacht was strictly correct in maintaining her course and speed, *CHIRP* suggests that an early and bold alteration to starboard to stop a close-quarters situation developing could have been an equally valid course of action since both vessels have a responsibility (again under rule 2) to avoid collision.

It might also have considered sounding 5 short blasts (rule 34d) to indicate that it did not understand the intentions of the PDV. And notwithstanding the risks that *CHIRP* has previously

noted about 'VHF-assisted collisions' it might also have been prudent to alert the PDV of their presence.

Key Issues

Situational Awareness – The yacht's crew displayed good situational awareness, which was lacking on board the motor cruiser. All vessels must keep a proper lookout at sea – there are no exceptions.

Alerting – When in doubt of another vessel's intentions, 5 short blasts on the whistle and at night the flashing of a white light is an effective way to get another vessel's attention. The VHF can also be a useful tool to alert them to your presence.



