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Message Markers – information, advice, warning

Welcome to DigiMar videos!

In this video, we will examine the use of three message markers: information, advice, and warning.

Message markers should be used by VTS operators and bridge teams to clarify the purpose of a message. Message markers should also be used when a degree of stress or urgency exists, when there are language difficulties, and when responding to unsafe situations. After watching this video, you will be able to apply the use of “information”, “advice”, and “warning” in general, but also when responding to unsafe situations.

This video uses examples from real-life scenarios. They may have been kept in their authentic form to support learning, even when they include mistakes or deviate from maritime communication standards.

Let us start with general authentic examples. DigiMar VTS provides Motor Vessel Sunrise with anchoring information.

“Good morning, Sunrise. Information. On arrival drop anchor on position Bravo one, Bravo one. Over.”

In this case, the message marker "information" is used. It precedes the message to make its purpose immediately clear. The purpose of the message was to provide anchoring information. Usually, the message marker “information” is used for providing navigational or traffic information.

The next message marker is “advice”. DigiMar VTS advises Motor Vessel Sunshine to reduce their speed.

“Advice. Reduce your speed to six knots.”

“Advice” includes a recommendation to the vessel. The decision whether to follow it remains with the vessel.

Let us finish with “warning”. DigiMar VTS warns the vessel of a drifting container in the fairway.

“Warning. Drifting container in the fairway.”

“Warning” is used to alert vessels to potential dangers. If “warning” is used, the receiver should pay immediate attention to the danger, and state their position, course, and speed in relation to the warning.

These message markers, as mentioned, can also be used in situations where a degree of stress or urgency is present. In such cases, "information" can be provided first, followed by "advice" in a subsequent message, and finally "warning".

Let us now have a look at the description of an authentic example in which these message markers are used in a sequence to make the increasing urgency of the situation clear. Motor Vessel Sunrise is entering a port outside the designated fairway. There the waters are shallow, and the vessel may run aground.



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First, only “information” is used.

“Motor Vessel Sunrise. This is Digimar VTS. Information. Shallow waters to the North of you. Alter course to starboard. Over.”

Next, “information” is used in combination with “advice”.

“Motor Vessel Sunrise. This is Digimar VTS. Information. Shallow waters to the North of you. Advice. Alter course to starboard. Over.”

Finally, “warning” is used instead of “information”, followed by “advice”.

“Motor Vessel Sunrise. This is Digimar VTS. Warning. Shallow waters to the North of you. Advice. Alter course to starboard. Over.”

In this case, we can see how the VTS operator used the three message markers in a sequence to make the increasing urgency of the situation clear. Let us restate that the general use of message markers is good practice, and VTS personnel should use message markers depending on their assessment of the situation.

In the VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology published by the International Association of Lighthouse Authorities you will find more suggestions on how to express contrast or negative confirmation on pages 10–11.

We hope that this video has been useful and that it will help you to successfully complete the chatbot exercises available at: <https://digimar.si/category/digital-tools/chatbots/>

Thank you for watching and stay tuned for more Digimar videos on effective maritime communication!