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### Case Study 7: Refusing Permission to Drift

Welcome to DigiMar case study videos!

To support learning, the case studies in these videos are based on real-world accidents and incidents with authentic VTS-vessel communication, including mistakes or deviations. However, for instructional purposes, content has been modified, adjusted, and simulated.. The names of ships and ports are anonymized.

You will find suggestions for improving communication at the end of each video. Also, the key issues in maritime communication identified in the accident investigation report will be explained.

In this case study, a vessel will try to convince the VTS to allow her to drift instead of dropping anchor while waiting for her berth to be ready.

Reflect on the following questions:

- How can VTS operators make the communication with vessels determined and assertive?
- In which ways can the VTS operator clearly deny a request made by the vessel?
- How can clear communication using message markers prevent the occurrence of a potentially critical situation?

Motor Vessel Sunrise contacts DigiMar VTS.

Motor Vessel Sunrise: DigiMar VTS, DigiMar VTS. This is Motor Vessel Sunrise.

DigiMar VTS: Motor Vessel Sunrise. This is DigiMar VTS.

Motor Vessel Sunrise: Sir, my ETA to pilot boarding station is twelve o'clock today. I'm waiting for confirmation from the pilot. May I stay adrift?

DigiMar VTS: Captain, you should drop your anchor on arrival, designated anchorage area is West, sector Charlie.

Motor Vessel Sunrise: Quoted, drop anchor upon arrival, West, Charlie. Thank you very much.

As Motor Vessel Sunrise approaches the pilot station, she makes a second call to DigiMar VTS to try to convince them once again to give her the permission to drift.



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Motor Vessel Sunrise: Digimar VTS, Digimar VTS, Digimar VTS. Motor Vessel Sunrise.

Digimar VTS: Motor Vessel Sunrise. This is VTS.

Motor Vessel Sunrise: We are arriving at the Pilot Station at twelve o'clock. But as per our information we should wait for Motor Vessel Sunset. According to exchanging information with pilot between fifteen and sixteen hundred something like that. May I stay adrift for this few hours? So what is your permission to stay adrift, not to drop anchor?

Digimar VTS: I don't have information regarding any other vessel's departure, and I don't have information what time your berth will be free so please drop anchor.

However, Motor Vessel Sunrise tries to avoid dropping anchor again by still asking for permission to drift. Digimar VTS insists that Motor Vessel Sunrise drop anchor and finally, the vessel agrees.

Motor Vessel Sunrise: No, we received this information as per our agent and berthing should be around fifteen, sixteen o'clock so may we drift?

Digimar VTS: No, Captain. Drop your anchor. Thank you.

Motor Vessel Sunrise: OK, copy.

### Suggestions for improvement

Let us now revisit some maritime communication protocols that could have been adopted in this case.

First, there is the message from Digimar VTS responding to Motor Vessel Sunrise's request for permission to drift: "Captain, you should drop your anchor on arrival, designated anchorage area anchorage West, sector Charlie."

The verb "should" makes the message from Digimar VTS ambiguous and less assertive. Action verbs should be used when asking ships to perform actions. Message markers should be used to increase the probability of the purpose of the message being properly understood and acted upon.

Therefore, the action verb "drop" could be used together with the message marker "advice" in order to increase clarity and avoid misunderstandings

Digimar VTS: ADVICE: drop your anchor on arrival, designated anchorage area is anchorage West, sector Charlie.

As Motor Vessel Sunrise approaches the pilot station, she makes a second call to Digimar VTS to try to convince them once again to give her permission not to drop anchor to which she receives the following response from Digimar VTS: "I don't have information regarding any other vessel's departure, and I don't have information what time your berth will be free so please drop anchor."



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The message marker “instruction” could be used if the vessel does not follow advice followed by the request for confirmation from the vessel to close the loop.

Digimar VTS: INSTRUCTION: no, you do not have permission to drift. You are cleared to anchorage West, sector Charlie. Confirm the instruction.

However, the vessel tries to avoid anchoring again by asking for permission to drift one last time, to which she receives the following final response from Digimar VTS: “No, Captain. Drop your anchor. Thank you.”

Again, a clear refusal of the permission to drift could be given by clearly answering the vessel’s request in the negative, and providing clear instructions of the action to be taken by the vessel.

Digimar VTS: No, do not drift. INSTRUCTION: Drop anchor in anchorage West, sector Charlie.

Finally, the use of informal language such as “please” in “please drop anchor”, and “thank you” might have made the vessel assume they could insist on their request to drift.

### **Key takeaways**

Please take a moment to reflect on the key takeaways. Thank you for watching.