

GOVERNMENT OF RAS AL KHAIMAH RAK PORTS

PILOTAGE DIRECTIONS 2025 Edition

RAK PORTS INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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The controlled current version is available on the website <https://rakports.ae/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Pilotage-Directions.pdf>*

Approved & Version Control
1. Document Control

Version No.	Date	Revisions
V1.0	30-08-2017	Initial release.
V2.0	24-09-2025	First revision incorporating the following changes: • Supersedes 2017 edition with refreshed definitions, terminology, and relevant updates. • Key updates: - Terminology and definitions refresh. - Fatigue and fitness compliance (IMO A.960, STCW, PMSC). - Risk-based pilotage authority. - Revised criteria (LOA, cargo, condition). - PEC eligibility. - MPX and BRM integration. - Legal alignment with applicable regulations. Refer MOC item. 202501101 for details.

Contents

GENERAL INTRODUCTION	4
DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT & COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK	5
DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS	6
SECTION 1: LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE	8
1.1 Authority	8
1.2 Commencement and Duration	8
1.3 Citation	8
1.4 Applicability	8
1.5 Legal and Regulatory Basis	8
1.6 Governance	8
1.7 Deviation	8
1.8 Master's Responsibilities	9
1.9 Reporting	9
1.10 Enforcement	9
1.11 Review and Amendment	9
SECTION 2: PILOTAGE REQUIREMENTS AND EXEMPTION	10
2.1 Scope of Application	10
2.2 Compulsory Pilotage	10
2.3 Exemption from Compulsory Pilotage	10
2.4 Tug and Tow Pilotage Methods	11
2.5 Dynamic Risk-Based Pilotage	11
2.6 Voluntary Pilotage	11
2.7 Harbour Master's Authority	11
2.8 Refusal of Pilotage	11
2.9 Fatigue and Fitness Compliance	12

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Pilotage Directions – 2025 Edition, which govern pilotage requirements and exemptions within RAK Ports, supersede the previous edition. These Directions form an integral part of the Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) and establish the operational framework for:

- Berthing and unberthing under pilotage.
- Internal vessel shifting under pilotage.
- Anchorage operations (where pilotage is applicable).

These Directions apply within designated Compulsory Pilotage Areas and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Pilotage Operations Manual.
- PEC Regulations – 2025 Edition.
- Passage Planning Guide.

Where applicable, these documents provide supporting procedural details. In the event of any discrepancy, the Pilotage Directions shall take precedence.

APPLICATION

These Directions apply to vessels arriving at, departing from, or manoeuvring within the following **Compulsory Pilotage Areas**:

- Saqr Port.
- RAK Maritime City (including Stevin Rock Harbour).
- Ras Al Khaimah Port.
- Al Jazeera Port.

Note: Al Jeer Port is designated as a non-compulsory pilotage area. However, pilotage may be required under specific conditions at the discretion of the Harbour Master.

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Document Link: <https://rakports.ae/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Pilotage-Directions.pdf>

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT & COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK

Document access

These Pilotage Directions are accessible to external stakeholders via the RAK Ports website and to internal users through IMS/RASCI. Printed copies are considered uncontrolled and must be checked against the latest authorised digital version to ensure accuracy.

Amendment process

Amendments are submitted to the Harbour Master, the Document Owner, and recorded under the RASCI – Process Management Procedure. Once approved, updates are published on the Marine section of the RAK Ports website and through IMS/RASCI to maintain consistency and traceability.

Document and record management

Documents and records follow IMS standards for classification, retention, access, and security.

Documents may be in paper, electronic, magnetic, photographic, or template form. They capture operational information and are tracked via a master list. Electronic versions are securely stored and revision controlled.

Records provide evidence of completed actions or outcomes. They are retained for at least two years and archived per the Archives Procedure.

Reviews are conducted as needed to ensure relevance. Obsolete versions are replaced, archived, and users are notified to prevent use of outdated materials.

Compliance

This framework aligns with applicable laws, international conventions, industry standards, and internal systems. Compliance is confirmed through internal and external PMSC audits.

Reference documents

The framework is informed by the following sources:

Category	Documents / Standards
Statutory & Regulatory	RAK Ports Regulations (Law No. 9 & 10). UAE Federal Maritime Law. GCC Seaport Regulations.
International Conventions	SOLAS – Safety of Life at Sea. MARPOL – Marine Pollution Convention. ISM – International Safety Management Code. ISPS – International Ship and Port Facility Security Code. STCW – Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers.
Industry Guidelines	Guide to Good Practice on Port Marine Operations (GtGP). RAK Ports Marine Publications.
External Compliance System	UK Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC).
Internal Compliance Systems	RAK Ports Marine Safety Management System (MSMS).

DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In these directions, the following terms and abbreviations shall have the meanings assigned:

Term	Definition
ALARP	As Low As Reasonably Practicable – principle for minimising safety risks to acceptable levels.
BRM	Bridge Resource Management.
CHA	Competent Harbour Authority – a responsible body to regulate marine operations including pilotage at RAK Ports.
COLREG	International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.
Compulsory Pilotage Area	Waters within RAK Ports where pilotage is compulsory unless exempted by a valid PEC.
Dangerous Goods	Substances classified as hazardous under the IMDG Code or IMO guidelines.
Dead-ship	A vessel without working propulsion or steering, requiring towage and pilotage.
DUKC	Dynamic Under Keel Clearance – a system that uses real-time vessel and environmental data to calculate safe clearance beneath the keel.
Harbour Master	RAK Ports Group Harbour Master and deputies.
IMDG Code	International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code – regulations for transporting hazardous cargo.
LOA	Length Overall – total vessel length including overhangs; for tows, measured from the tug's bow to the stern of the last unit.
Master	The certified person lawfully in command of a vessel.
MPX	Master–Pilot Exchange – formal briefing between Master and Pilot prior to pilotage.
MSMS	Marine Safety Management System – framework for managing marine safety at RAK Ports.
PEC	Pilotage Exemption Certificate – authorisation for a bona fide Master or First Mate to conduct pilotage without a Pilot, subject to CHA approval.
Pilot	A person authorised by RAK Ports to guide vessels and advise Masters within port limits.
PPU	Portable Pilot Unit – device providing real-time navigational data to Pilots.
Tug and Tow / Composite Unit	A tug with towed units (e.g. barges, pontoons) lacking independent propulsion or manoeuvrability.
UKC	Under Keel Clearance – vertical distance between a vessel's keel and the seabed.
Unusual Vessel	A vessel with non-standard size, design, handling characteristics, or restricted visibility.

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SECTION 1: LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE

This section defines the legal authority, scope, and governance structure for pilotage operations within RAK Ports.

1.1 Authority

These Pilotage Directions are issued pursuant to the RAK Ports Regulations (Law No. 9 of 2008, as amended by Law No. 10 of 2017), which establish the statutory framework for marine operations and compliance, including pilotage requirements within RAK Ports and its jurisdictional waters.

1.2 Commencement and duration

These directions shall take effect from 01 September 2025 and shall remain in force until amended or revoked by the Harbour Master, acting under the authority of the Competent Harbour Authority (CHA).

1.3 Citation

These directions may be formally cited as Pilotage Directions 2025.

1.4 Applicability

These directions apply to:

- Vessels operating within RAK Ports' Compulsory Pilotage Areas (refer to Section 2.2).
- Holders of valid PECs, in accordance with the PEC Regulations – 2025 Edition.

1.5 Legal and regulatory basis

Pilotage operations within RAK Ports are governed by the following instruments:

- RAK Ports Regulations (Laws 9 & 10).
- UAE Federal Maritime Law – Decree No. 43 of 2023.
- International Conventions – SOLAS, MARPOL, ISM, ISPS, STCW, COLREGs.
- IMO Resolutions – A.960(23) on pilot training; A.893(21) on safe navigation.
- UK Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC).
- Guide to Good Practice on Port Marine Operations (GtGP).

1.6 Governance

The Harbour Master is authorised to:

- Oversee pilotage operations within port limits.
- Issue and manage PECs under defined criteria.
- Approve deviations from standard procedures where operationally justified.
- Issue Special Directions to mitigate navigational, safety, or environmental risks.

1.7 Deviation

Deviation from these Directions is permitted only under exceptional circumstances, subject to:

- Prior approval by the Harbour Master.
- A documented risk assessment demonstrating that safety and compliance are maintained.

1.8 Master's responsibilities

The Master remains responsible for the vessel's safety and compliance with COLREGs and other applicable regulations throughout pilotage, regardless of the Pilot's presence.

1.9 Reporting

Masters, Pilots, and PEC holders must report any incidents, near misses, or deviations promptly.

Reporting procedures are specified in the 'Pilotage Operations Manual' and must be followed using appropriate reporting forms.

1.10 Enforcement

Non-compliance with these Directions may result in:

- Administrative penalties or fines.
- Suspension or revocation of PECs.
- Operational restrictions on vessel movement.
- Reporting to Flag State or Port State Control.
- Implementation of additional safety measures as deemed necessary by the Harbour Master.

1.11 Review and amendment

These Directions may be amended as required to reflect changes in law, operational practice, or safety standards. Approved updates shall be published via official RAK Ports channels. Users must refer to the latest authorised version.

SECTION 2: PILOTAGE REQUIREMENTS AND EXEMPTION

This section outlines the pilotage requirements, exemptions, and operational protocols applicable to pilotage and PECs within RAK Ports. It supports safe navigation, efficient port operations, and compliance with international maritime standards.

2.1 Scope of application

Pilotage is compulsory for vessels arriving at, departing from, or manoeuvring within the following compulsory pilotage areas, unless exempted under Section 2.3:

- Saqr Port (Inner Harbour & Deep-Water Bulk Terminal).
- RAK Maritime City (including Stevin Rock Harbour).
- Ras Al Khaimah Port.
- Al Jazeera Port.

Note: Al Jeer Port is designated as a non-compulsory pilotage area. However, pilotage may be required under specific conditions at the discretion of the Harbour Master, based on vessel type, operational risk, or environmental factors.

2.2 Compulsory pilotage

- Pilotage is compulsory under any of the following conditions:
- **LOA ≥ 60 metres:** All vessels with a Length Overall of 60 metres or more.
- **Passenger vessels > 12 persons:** Vessels engaged in passenger transport carrying more than 12 persons.
- **Tug and tow combinations LOA ≥ 60 metres:** Total combined length of tug and tow units.
- **Dangerous goods / pollutants LOA ≥ 20 metres:** Vessels carrying hazardous cargo as per the IMDG Code and MARPOL Annexes I & II.
- **Mechanical or manoeuvrability deficiencies:** Vessels with propulsion, steering, or navigational failure, or those unable to manoeuvre independently.

Notes:

- Vessels with unusual design or handling characteristics (e.g., restricted visibility, non-standard configurations), regardless of size, draft, or beam, may be subject to compulsory pilotage at the Harbour Master's discretion.
- Additional pilotage measures may be applied to capsized vessels with drafts exceeding 17 metres, and to other large vessels with complex manoeuvring characteristics. If required, a second pilot may be assigned; however, pilotage is normally conducted by a single Class 1 Pilot under standard operating conditions.
- Additional requirements may apply based on berth-specific conditions, navigational complexity, or operational risk assessments.

2.3 Exemption from compulsory pilotage

Exemptions are based on the following conditions:

- **UAE Navy, Coast Guard, Emergency Vessels** – Exempt when on active duty.
- **PEC Holders** – Exempt for designated vessel and area, subject to approval.
- **Small Vessels** – Exempt if under 20 metres LOA, unless towing or carrying hazardous cargo.

- **Tenant-Controlled Operations** – Exempt for vessels < 100 metres LOA within 50 metres of quay, with prior approval.
- **Berth-Shifting** – Exempt if shifting berth using mooring lines without propulsion, subject to approval.
- **Al Jeer Port Operations** – Pilotage may be required for first-time callers, vessels > 5,000 GT, restricted visibility, tidal constraints, mechanical deficiencies, or other high-risk scenarios.

Notes:

- Exemptions may also be granted at the Harbour Master's discretion, based on a documented risk assessment demonstrating that navigational safety and compliance are maintained.
- Refer to the **PEC Regulations – 2025 Edition** for application, assessment, renewal, and revocation procedures.

2.4 Tug and tow pilotage methods

RAK Ports applies structured pilotage methods for tug and tow operations:

- **Single-leg Pilotage:** Continuous pilotage from the Pilot Boarding Ground directly to berth. **Applicable Ports:** RAK Maritime City, Ras Al Khaimah Port, Al Jazeera Port.
- **Two-leg Pilotage:** Sea pilotage conducted by the Senior Tug Master, with handover to the Shore Bosun near the berth. **Applicable Ports:** Saqr Port Inner Harbour, Stevin Rock Harbour. **Notes:** May also be applied at Ras Al Khaimah Port and RAK Maritime City on a case-by-case basis, depending on operational conditions. In such cases, the Pilot or Senior Tug Master hands over to the Shore Bosun as the tow combination nears the berth.
- **Case-specific Pilotage:** Applicable to Al Jeer Port and based on tow configuration, visibility, and navigational complexity.

Refer to the **SOP for Tug and Tow Operations** for procedural details – www.rakports.ae/marine.

2.5 Dynamic risk-based pilotage

The Harbour Master may mandate pilotage at any time if real-time conditions compromise safety, overriding exemptions or valid PECs. This includes risks related to weather, navigation, vessel condition, or *operational* complexity.

2.6 Voluntary pilotage

Any vessel, including those with valid PECs, may request pilotage voluntarily. Requests must be submitted via the vessel's agent and are subject to pilot availability.

2.7 Harbour Master's authority

The Harbour Master may authorise deviations from these Directions if:

- Risks are assessed as ALARP (As Low As Reasonably Practicable).
- Appropriate safety measures are implemented.
- The deviation is documented and retained onboard.

2.8 Refusal of pilotage

A Pilot may refuse pilotage if the vessel presents an unacceptable safety risk. Grounds include:

- Unsafe pilot ladder (non-compliant with SOLAS V/23).
- Deficiencies in propulsion, steering, or navigation systems.

- Incomplete MPX or missing Pilot Card.
- Crew fatigue or inadequate readiness.
- Adverse weather exceeding operational thresholds.

2.9 Fatigue and fitness compliance

RAK Ports requires all personnel engaged in pilotage operations to meet fatigue and fitness standards in accordance with IMO Resolution A.960(23), the STCW Convention, and the UK Port Marine Safety Code.

Pilots shall

- Be medically fit and free from physical or mental impairment.
- Assess readiness before duty and report fatigue or health concerns.
- Adhere to rostered rest periods and duty hour limits.
- Undergo scheduled medical assessments.
- Operate PPUs and be familiar with DUKC system to support safe navigation.
- Participate in simulator training to maintain competence and comply with audit requirements.

PEC holders shall

- Be medically fit and free from physical or mental impairment.
- Assess readiness before duty and report fatigue or health concerns.
- Follow regulated rest periods and duty hour limits.
- Undergo periodic medical assessments.
- Remain conversant with RAK Ports pilotage procedures, rules, and safety protocols.

Masters and bridge watchkeeping officers shall

- Hold valid medical certification and STCW-compliant endorsements.
- Comply with rest hour and watchkeeping regulations.
- Assess fitness for duty and report limitations affecting safe navigation.
- Be familiar with RAK Ports procedures including the Pilotage Directions, Pilotage Operations Manual, and Passage Planning Guide.
- Ensure safe pilot transfer and bridge team readiness.
- Integrate the Pilot into BRM to support shared situational awareness and coordinated decision-making. All navigational actions must remain consistent with COLREGs, particularly in relation to safe speed, risk of collision, and conduct in narrow channels or confined waters.