

CIRCULAR	Circular No. 029 (Amended)
SUBJECT	Mandatory Notification of Marine Casualties, Serious Marine Incidents, Near Misses, PSC Detentions and Preservation of Evidence
FROM	Office of the Maritime Administrator, Vanuatu International Shipping Registry
TO	All shipowners, managers, operators, masters, DPAs, Special Agents, Recognized Organizations, Flag State Inspectors, insurers and relevant stakeholders
AMENDMENT DATE	20 August 2026
EFFECTIVE DATE	Upon publication
STATUS	Version 1.0 in the amended consolidated series - fills the previously unused Circular No. 029

Authority and legal status. This Circular is issued by the Maritime Administrator under the functions and powers conferred by the Maritime Act [CAP 131], as amended by the Maritime (Amendment) Act No. 21 of 2025, including section 10C where applicable, and any additional written authority lawfully applicable to the subject. It shall be read with applicable mandatory IMO instruments and controlled VISR policies. It does not convert a direct statutory power into a delegated power, transfer a function assigned by law to another State entity, or amend any valid appointment, concession or other governing instrument.

Related controlled policies: VISR-QMS-POL-CAS-010 - Marine Casualty and Marine Incident Safety Investigation Policy; VISR-QMS-POL-REC-005 - Document and Records Control, Retention and IMSAS Evidence Management Policy; VISR-QMS-POL-CI-002 - IMSAS Compliance, Internal Audit, Corrective Action and Continual Improvement Policy; VISR-QMS-POL-PSC-008 - International Fleet PSC Performance, Detention and Corrective Action Policy.

1. Events requiring immediate notification

- Loss of life, serious injury, missing person, abandonment, fire, explosion, flooding, grounding, collision, allision, loss of propulsion or steering, structural failure or loss of the ship.
- Actual or threatened pollution, cargo loss, wreck, navigation hazard, machinery or equipment failure creating serious risk, or a security event affecting safe operation.
- Port State detention, refusal of access, expulsion, significant operational restriction, major non-conformity or intervention by a coastal, port or law-enforcement authority.
- Near miss, unsafe occurrence or recurring deficiency that could reasonably have caused a serious casualty or major pollution incident.
- Suspected forged records, concealment, unauthorized alteration of evidence, false reporting or interference with an investigator.

2. Notification timing and minimum content

- A serious casualty, serious incident, detention or ongoing danger must be notified immediately by the fastest available means and, in any event, no later than two hours after the company or master becomes aware.
- Other reportable incidents and material near misses must be notified as soon as practicable and no later than 24 hours after awareness.
- The initial report must state vessel identity, date and UTC time, position, voyage, persons affected, event description, present condition, pollution or cargo risk, authorities contacted, assistance required and contact details.
- An incomplete initial report must not be delayed while facts are gathered; it must be supplemented promptly as information becomes available.
- PSC detention reports and all deficiency lists must be transmitted in full, not summarized selectively.

3. Mandatory preservation of evidence

- Preserve VDR and S-VDR data, ECDIS records, AIS and LRIT data, VMS data where applicable, radar plots, alarms, engine and bridge data and relevant electronic backups.
- Preserve official and rough logbooks, work/rest records, permits, checklists, maintenance records, SMS procedures, audit records, certificates, charts, plans, cargo, bunker and stability information.
- Preserve emails, messages, audio, photographs, CCTV, drone or mobile-device evidence, witness details and communications with authorities, agents, ROs, insurers and salvors.
- Do not overwrite, delete, repair, dismantle, dispose of, alter or release material evidence except for immediate safety, life-saving or pollution-prevention reasons, and document any unavoidable change.
- Issue a written preservation notice to relevant company personnel, service providers and vessels and maintain a chain-of-custody record for collected evidence.

4. Investigation cooperation and independence

- The company, master, crew, RO, FSI, Special Agent and service providers must cooperate with the competent safety-investigation authority and with any lawful preliminary assessment by VISR.
- Safety investigation is separate from disciplinary, civil, criminal, insurance or administrative proceedings; information must not be manipulated to protect commercial interests or allocate blame.
- No person whose conduct is materially under review may control the investigation, select evidence to be withheld or intimidate a witness.
- Where Vanuatu law assigns the formal investigation to another independent State body, VISR will preserve and transmit relevant evidence and will not purport to replace that authority.
- Legal privilege may be preserved where applicable, but privilege must not be used to conceal operational facts, destroy evidence or frustrate a lawful investigation.

5. Follow-up and closure

VISR may require a preliminary report, root-cause analysis, corrective and preventive action, independent technical review, additional ISM audit, fleet-wide review and effectiveness verification. A case is closed only through a written decision supported by objective evidence; commercial settlement or port-State release does not by itself close the flag-State safety review.

Compliance records and communications

All applications, approvals, notices, reports, evidence, decisions, acknowledgements and corrective-action records required by this Circular must be transmitted through an official VISR channel and retained in the controlled Registry file in accordance with the VISR records policy. Communications from unverified domains or persons without written authority must not be relied upon.

Official contact: technical@register-vu.com. Urgent safety, casualty, sanctions or fraud matters must also be copied to info@register-vu.com and reported without delay.

Enforcement, reasons and reconsideration

Non-compliance may result in enhanced inspection, corrective-action requirements, service restrictions, suspension, administrative penalties, withdrawal or revocation of documents, or deletion from the Registry, to the extent authorized by law and the applicable written authority. Except where immediate protective action is necessary for safety, security, sanctions compliance, documentary integrity or preservation of evidence, an affected person will be notified of the material grounds and given a reasonable opportunity to respond. A request for reconsideration must be submitted in writing to the Office of the Maritime Administrator with supporting evidence within ten business days of the written decision, unless a shorter period is stated because of an urgent risk.

Supersession and effective application

No prior operative Circular No. 029 was located in the controlled public catalogue. This instrument fills that unused number as part of the amended consolidated series and is effective upon publication. It does not supersede any Fleet Safety Letter or vessel-specific instruction addressing the same event.



Saade Makhoul

Maritime Administrator of the Republic of Vanuatu
Vanuatu International Shipping Registry

Issued in Port Vila and New York
20 August 2026