CIRCULAR	Number 042
SUBJECT	**Mandatory clearance for Hormuz and Oman waters**
FROM	Office of the Maritime Administrator Vanuatu International Shipping Registry
TO	All owners, managers, operators, charterers, Masters, designated persons ashore, company security officers, agents, recognized organizations and insurers of Vanuatu-flagged vessels
DRAFT DATE	6 November 2026
EFFECTIVE DATE	Upon official issuance and publication
STATUS	Approved

No Vanuatu-flagged vessel may transit the Strait of Hormuz or enter the area defined below without advance notification to the Administration and express written permission. Permission will be considered individually, according to the security situation, verified insurance and the vessel's readiness. It is not automatic.

This Circular establishes flag-State operating requirements under the Maritime Act [CAP 131], as amended, and applicable administrative authority. It supplements Circulars 029 and 036 and does not replace coastal-State directions or applicable international obligations.

1. Scope and prior permission

These requirements apply to every Vanuatu-flagged vessel, including oil, product, chemical and gas tankers, whether laden or in ballast. The Reporting and Clearance Area comprises the Strait of Hormuz and its approaches, the Gulf of Oman, and waters within 50 nautical miles of the coast of Oman, including Musandam and Omani islands. Omani ports, terminals and anchorages are included.

Owners and Masters must obtain written permission before entry into this area and before each Hormuz transit in either direction. A return transit requires separate permission unless expressly included in an existing approval. Receipt of an application, payment of a fee, an agent's assurance or silence from the Administration does not constitute permission.

2. Advance notification

Submit a complete application at least 48 hours before planned entry or transit. Where the passage from the last port is shorter, apply before departure from that port. Late planning or commercial pressure does not waive prior permission. Remain outside the area at a safe location or adopt a safe alternative voyage plan pending the decision, subject to section 8.

Send applications to technical@register-vu.com and admin@register-vu.com, copying info@register-vu.com and compliance@register-vu.com. Use the subject: HORMUZ CLEARANCE / VESSEL NAME / IMO NUMBER / ENTRY DATE UTC. Iran-related concerns must also be copied to sanctions@register-vu.com.

3. Information required with the application

- Vessel name, IMO number, flag documents, class and statutory certificate status; owner, ISM manager, charterer and beneficial-owner details; and continuous contact details for the Master, DPA and company security officer.
- Present position; route and waypoints; entry, transit and exit times in UTC; last and next ports; intended Omani calls, anchorages, bunkering or STS operations; and contingency routes and safe waiting arrangements.
- Cargo description, quantity, verified origin, loading and discharge locations, counterparties and relevant cargo documents; sanctions-screening results and a signed declaration of compliance with the Iran prohibitions.
- A voyage-specific security and navigational risk assessment, including current official warnings, coastal-State instructions, crew protection, emergency response, medical evacuation and pollution response; plus the insurance and readiness evidence below.

4. Insurance must be verified before permission

The Administration will not issue permission until it has verified satisfactory insurance for the vessel, the intended route, cargo, activities and entire period of exposure. The owner must submit policy schedules, certificates of entry, endorsements and current written confirmation from the relevant insurer or P&I Club, with independently verifiable contacts.

- Evidence must address hull and machinery and applicable war-risk cover, together with primary and excess war P&I arrangements where relevant. It must identify protection for crew injury, death and repatriation, pollution liabilities, wreck removal, salvage and other material third-party exposures of the proposed voyage.
- Confirm how the policies respond to the assessed threats, including hostile acts, terrorism, malicious damage, mines and missile or drone attacks, and disclose any seizure or detention limitations. Identify all material exclusions, limits, deductibles, territorial restrictions, sanctions clauses and cancellation or automatic-termination provisions.
- Provide any required listed-area or voyage endorsements, insurer consents and evidence that additional premiums and conditions necessary for cover have been satisfied. State the precise insured dates and geographic limits, including arrangements for delay or extension.

A general insurance certificate or a broker's unsupported assurance is insufficient to establish cover for this voyage. The Administration may seek direct confirmation or require additional cover and may refuse permission where a material risk remains inadequately insured. Insurance cannot authorize prohibited trade or compensate for an unacceptable safety risk.

Coverage must remain effective throughout the approved exposure. Notify the Administration immediately of cancellation, restriction, non-renewal or any material change. Before entry, a change affecting required cover suspends reliance on the permission pending written revalidation. If already in the area, the Master must take the safest practicable action and obtain urgent instructions without compromising immediate safety.

5. Safety and firefighting readiness

The Master and company must submit a signed readiness declaration supported by current inspection, maintenance, service and test records. Disclose all defects, overdue surveys, conditions of class, exemptions and outstanding PSC or flag-State findings. Safety-critical deficiencies must be rectified and verified before clearance.

- Confirm operational propulsion, steering, emergency power, navigation, communications and distress equipment; lifesaving appliances; emergency lighting; and available medical and pollution-response equipment.
- Verify fire detection and alarms, main and emergency fire pumps, hydrants, hoses, fixed and portable extinguishing systems, fire doors, dampers, emergency stops, breathing apparatus, protective equipment and escape routes. Firefighting media must be sufficient, serviceable and suitable for the vessel and cargo.
- For tankers, verify cargo-system integrity, leak and gas detection, emergency shutdown, deck foam or water-spray systems, inert-gas arrangements and associated protective systems where required or fitted. Disclose the cargo's fire, explosion and toxic hazards and the measures to control them.
- Complete and record a pre-voyage emergency drill appropriate to the assessed threats. Brief crew on shelter, muster, firefighting, casualty care and abandonment procedures. Apply the ship security plan and relevant current maritime-security guidance.

The Administration may require an onboard flag-State inspection, recognized-organization attendance, additional tests or independent verification before deciding the application.

6. Conditions and limits of permission

Only the Maritime Administrator, or an official expressly authorized in writing, may issue clearance through a verified VISR channel. The decision will identify the vessel, route, direction, time window, approved activities and conditions. Permission may be withheld, restricted, suspended or withdrawn as circumstances change.

Any material change in route, cargo, counterparties, schedule, insurance or vessel condition requires renewed review before the affected operation proceeds. An ordinary transit clearance does not authorize STS: any otherwise lawful STS operation in the area requires separate express written clearance and all necessary coastal-State approvals.

Flag-State permission is not a guarantee of safe passage or a substitute for required local clearance. Owners and Masters retain responsibility for safe voyage planning and compliance with current lawful coastal-State and security-coordination instructions. An unacceptable risk requires postponement or a safe alternative even where insurance is available.

7. Iranian ports cargo and STS prohibitions

No Vanuatu-flagged vessel may make a prohibited Iranian port call, conduct Iran-related commercial operations, carry cargo to or from Iran, trade in or commercially carry Iranian-origin goods, or undertake Iran-related ship-to-ship transfers. The prohibition includes Iranian crude oil, petroleum products, condensate, petrochemicals and other Iranian-origin cargo, including indirect carriage through intermediaries, blending, transshipment or third-country loading.

STS involving Iranian waters, Iranian-origin or Iranian-controlled cargo, Iranian counterparties or restricted parties remains prohibited wherever the transfer occurs. Cargo provenance and the identity of all participating vessels and counterparties must be verified. Concealment through false documents, tracking manipulation or misleading cargo descriptions is prohibited.

Hormuz or Oman clearance grants no exemption from Circular 036 or applicable sanctions. Its strictly limited humanitarian, protective and distress provisions remain subject to their own requirements; this Circular creates no commercial exception.

8. Position reports incidents and urgent safety action

Report actual entry, commencement and completion of each Hormuz transit, and final exit, with UTC times and positions. Provide at least daily position and safety updates while in the area, or more frequently if directed. Maintain required AIS and other tracking; any lawful safety-related interruption must be recorded and reported as soon as safely practicable.

Notify any attack, threat, fire, damage, injury, pollution or material near miss without delay, including events apparently causing no harm. Circular 029 requires serious incidents or ongoing danger to be reported immediately and within two hours of awareness; other reportable events must be notified as soon as practicable and within 24 hours. Preserve voyage data, logs, communications and other evidence and supplement the initial report promptly.

The Master must take immediately necessary action to save life, respond to distress or avoid imminent danger without waiting for permission. Notify the Administration immediately, or as soon as safe communications permit, and document the necessity and action taken. No vessel is to stop, turn or wait in an unsafe position merely to await an administrative response. This safeguard does not authorize commercial circumvention or prohibited Iran-related activity.

9. Implementation and enforcement

Vessels already in the area when this Circular takes effect must notify the Administration immediately, provide their position, intended movements, insurance and readiness status, and obtain instructions before any further discretionary transit or operation. Section 8 governs immediate safety needs.

Owners and managers must circulate these requirements to their vessels and relevant departments and retain applications, supporting evidence and decisions. Non-compliance may lead to withdrawal of permission, operational restrictions, additional inspection, administrative penalties, suspension or deletion to the extent authorized by law. Enforcement will identify the grounds and applicable authority and follow required procedures.

These requirements take effect upon official issuance and publication and remain in force until amended or withdrawn in writing by the Maritime Administrator.

Saade Makhlouf
Maritime Administrator
Republic of Vanuatu

Related instrument Circular 029 on incident notification and preservation of evidence

Related instrument Circular 036 on Iranian ports and Iran related activity