

Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule 14

A submission from US Sailing

Purpose

To change rule 14 so that it is fairer and also so that it is consistent with rule 21.

Proposal

Change rule 14 as follows:

14 AVOIDING CONTACT

A boat shall avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible. However, a right-of-way boat or one ~~entitled to~~ sailing within the room or mark-room to which she is entitled

- (a) need not act to avoid contact until it is clear that the other boat is not *keeping clear* or giving room or mark-room, and
- (b) shall be exonerated if she breaks this rule and the contact does not cause damage or injury.

Current Position

As above.

Reasons

1. Consider a situation where W is overlapped to windward and inside of L within the zone at a leeward mark. L has given W more than enough space, but W is not sailing within the mark-room to which she is entitled. Instead, she sails to leeward of that space, and makes contact with L (without damage). W breaks rule 11, and she will not be exonerated by rule 21. If W could have avoided the contact but failed to do so, she also broke rule 14. But will she be penalized under current rule 14? The answer is no. Since W was a boat entitled to mark-room and the contact did not cause injury or damage, she is exonerated by rule 14(b). That doesn't seem right. If a give-way boat is not sailing within the room or mark-room to which she is entitled, she should not be exonerated when she could have avoided contact but didn't. If the proposal is approved, W will not be exonerated for breaking rule 14. Cases 25 and 70 involve similar situations.
2. The proposed added words will also affect the impact of rule 14(a) on a boat entitled to room or mark-room. If such a boat is not sailing within that room or mark-room, she will not enjoy the benefit that current rule 14(a) confers on any boat entitled to room or mark-room. Proposed rule 14(a) is fairer than the broader benefit that the current rule 14(a) confers on any boat entitled to room or mark-room.
3. The new wording chosen for proposed rule 14(a) is the same as the wording used in rule 21. When it is possible, using the same wording in two rules makes those rules simpler. This is the case because the reader does not have to answer the question, 'Why are these two rules worded differently?'