Situation

Two 50 foot boats are heading towards a breakwater in 20 knots of breeze. Boat A is 5 boat lengths to leeward and also 5 boats lengths ahead of boat B.

Boat A calls repeatedly for room to tack, but under the existing conditions the call cannot be heard by boat B.

Question

If a call for room to tack is made when it cannot possibly be heard, is it still a valid hail for the purpose of rule 20.1? That is, does it place a responsibility under rule 20.2 upon boat B when there is no chance she could have heard the hail?

Answer

No. The hail must clearly communicate the hailing boat’s need to tack and be sufficiently loud to be heard in the prevailing conditions (Case 54). A hail that it is not reasonably possible that will be heard by the hailed boat is not considered a hail for the purpose of rule 20.1 and does not place any responsibility on boat B under rule 20.2(b) or (c).