

No. 45.

New Zealand, Dominions No. 431.

MY LORD,—

Downing Street, 4th July, 1917.

I have the honour to transmit to Your Excellency, for the information of your Ministers, copies of a notice to shipowners and masters which has been issued by the Board of Trade regarding special precautions to be taken when a vessel is in a danger area.

I have, &c.,

WALTER H. LONG.

Governor-General His Excellency the Right Hon. the Earl of Liverpool,
P.C., G.C.M.G., M.V.O., &c.

Enclosure.

NOTICE TO SHIPOWNERS AND MASTERS.

Special Precautions when a Vessel is in a Submarine Area or Danger-zone.

1. THIS notice is a new edition, with important alterations and additions, of two notices previously issued by the Board of Trade with regard to the special precautions to be taken when British vessels go through a danger-zone. The preceding notices were issued in August, 1915 (Notice 365), and May, 1916 (Notice 374); and these notices are now cancelled.

This notice, which is issued after consultation with the Ministry of Shipping, applies to all sea-going British merchant ships, whether chartered or requisitioned by His Majesty's Government or not.

Areas in which there is a possibility of attack by enemy submarines or collisions with mines are indicated in the Admiralty Instructions to Masters.

2. When a ship strikes a mine or is torpedoed it is impossible to rely on there being sufficient time to take measures to keep the vessel afloat. Experience has shown that open watertight doors, and open side-scuttles or other apertures in the ship's side, have caused the loss of vessels which might have remained afloat. Further, as the damage by a torpedo or mine may be so great that no measures could keep the vessel afloat for long, arrangements made in advance for getting all persons on board into boats or upon rafts are of great importance.

It is essential, therefore, that where a vessel is going through dangerous waters all possible arrangements, in view of an attack by submarine or collision with a mine, should be made in advance; and those concerned should take, or ensure the taking of, the precautions in this notice, which has been drawn up after careful consideration of the facts relating to the loss of a large number of vessels through mine or torpedo. Owners and masters are primarily responsible for taking these precautions, or for ensuring that they are taken.

3. In addition to the precautions indicated in this notice, those concerned should take any special and additional measures that may be necessary in particular circumstances. Attention is called to the serious consequences in which those responsible would be involved should the loss of a ship or loss of life result from the omission to take any necessary precautions.

4. This notice comes into operation immediately upon issue, but if full compliance with any requirement would seriously delay the sailing of a vessel such compliance may be deferred. In such cases temporary arrangements should, wherever possible, be made to secure as far as practicable the objects in view; and the whole of the requirements should be carried out as soon as practicable after the issue of the notice.

WATERTIGHT BULKHEADS AND TUNNELS.

5. Care should be taken to maintain all bulkheads and tunnels which are intended to be watertight in a thoroughly watertight condition.

WATERTIGHT DOORS.

6. Doors in watertight bulkheads which are not essential for the working of the ship at sea on the intended voyage should be closed and secured in that position before the voyage commences, and kept closed while at sea. All watertight doors in passage-ways from firemen's quarters to the stokehold should be kept closed, the firemen using the fidley ladders. Where suitable provision is made for the exit of the crew or passengers from their quarters by means of ladderways through the deck above, the watertight doors which are required solely for access to those quarters should be kept closed.

In all cases where this is practicable a watertight trunk should be fitted from the bulkhead deck to the shaft-tunnel, and the tunnel-door kept closed. All possible arrangements should also be made to enable watertight bunker-doors to be kept closed in a danger area—*e.g.*, if there are side bunkers or bunkers the doors to which are in non-watertight bulkheads, coal should be worked from these in danger areas and the doors in watertight bulkheads kept closed. In other cases shoots should, if practicable, be fitted so that coal carried between decks or in the bridge-space may be used and the opening of lower watertight doors be avoided. Failing these possibilities, as much coal as practicable, having regard to safe working and weather conditions, should be stowed on the stokehold plates for use in the danger-zone.