

MALTA MARITIME AUTHORITY

MERCHANT SHIPPING DIRECTORATE

Notice to Shipowners, Ship Operators and Managers,  
and Ship Masters and Officers

*MSD Notice No 19*

**INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON STANDARDS OF  
TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND WATCHKEEPING FOR  
SEAFARERS, 1978 AS AMENDED IN 1995**

The Merchant Shipping Directorate would like to draw attention to the 1995 amendments to the International Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978 {STCW 95} that entered into force on the 1 February 1997.

The revised STCW Convention contains some new regulations which have an immediate effect. It is not the intention of this Notice to describe in detail the provisions of the revised Convention or to list the obligations of companies. These are well described in the STCW 95 Convention itself and in IMO Circular STCW 7/Circ 1 and in other publications such as The Revised STCW Convention and The STCW 95 Company Check List both published by the International Shipping Federation. However, without any way diminishing the importance of other provisions, some important requirements relate to the following:

**Responsibilities of companies**

Regulation 1/14 requires companies {shipowners, ship operators and managers, and bareboat charterers} to ensure that seafarers assigned on board ships hold appropriate and valid certificates in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and that ships are manned in compliance with the ships's minimum safe Manning Certificate issued, in the case of Maltese ships, by this Directorate.

Companies are also required to maintain documentation records and data for all seafarers employed on their ships and to have these readily accessible at all times. Such information should include, without being limited to, documentation and data on experience, training, medical fitness and competency in assigned duties.

Moreover, companies shall ensure that their ships are provided with appropriate written procedures for ship-specific on board familiarisation for persons newly employed or engaged on a sea going ship.

Furthermore, companies shall also ensure that the crew can effectively coordinate their activities in emergencies and in the performance of functions vital to safety or to the prevention or mitigation of pollution.

### **Rest periods and watchkeeping requirements**

Regulation VIII enforces a minimum rest period of 10 hours of rest in any 24 hour period for all personnel forming part of a watch. These hours of rest may be divided into no more than two periods, one of which shall be at least of 6 hours duration. These rest periods need not be maintained in the case of an emergency or drill or in an overriding operational condition. The minimum period of 10 hours may be reduced to not less than 6 consecutive hours provided that any such reduction shall not extend beyond two days, and not less than 70 hours rest are provided each seven day period.

Regulation VIII/2 and Part A of the STCW Code require that watch schedules are posted where they are easily accessible. The attention of companies, masters, chief engineer officers and all watchkeeping personnel is also drawn to the revised watchkeeping requirements, principals and guidance set out in the STCW Code. Moreover, ship masters must ensure that watchkeeping arrangements are adequate for safety and that all watchkeeping provisions are duly observed.

### **Training**

Regulation VI/1 requires that all persons on board sea-going ships, other than passengers, must have received basic shipboard familiarisation training or sufficient information and instructions. This should take place before persons are assigned to shipboard duties, and could comprise verbal instructions, written material or videos ensuring that personnel are able to:

- communicate with other persons on board on elementary safety matters and understand safety information symbols, signs and alarm signals
- know what to do if a person falls overboard , if fire or smoke is detected, or if the fire or abandon ship alarm is sounded
- identify muster and embarkation stations and emergency escape routes
- locate and put on life-jackets
- raise the alarm and have basic knowledge of the use of portable fire extinguishers
- take immediate action upon encountering an accident or other medical emergency before seeking further medical assistance on board
- close and open the fire, weathertight and watertight doors fitted on the particular ship other than those for hull openings.

The training requirements for personnel on tankers remain essentially unchanged in substance from the 1978 Convention.

All seafarers with designated safety or pollution prevention duties must have undergone basic training and hold evidence of having achieved the required standard of competence within the previous five years.

Seafarers designated to control fire fighting operations, provide medical first aid or take charge of medical care on board ship must have met the required standard of competence and either hold a certificate or documentary evidence to that effect or hold a certificate which includes in its qualifications the required training.

Mandatory minimum requirements for the training and qualifications of masters, officers and ratings on ro-ro passenger ships have also been introduced. However, full implementation of these standards may be delayed until 1 August 1998.

The notice of companies is drawn to the fact that the revised Convention makes several references to the use of the English language by seafarers.

### **Certificates and Endorsements**

Regulation 1/2 stipulates that any certificate required by the Convention be kept available in its original form on board the ship on which the holder is

serving. It is important that companies and ship masters ensure compliance with the provisions of this regulation.

The provisions of Regulation 1/10 {Recognition of certificates} become mandatory on 1 February 2002. In terms of Regulation 1/15, seafarers who are presently engaged on board trading ships may continue to serve and have their certificates endorsed and re-validated in accordance with the provisions of the STCW 78 until this date.

Holders of STCW 78 certificates are, however, advised to take early action to ensure that they meet STCW 95 certification requirements well in advance of this deadline.

The Directorate will continue with its present policy of recognising certain foreign certificates issued in terms of STCW 78. However, by 1 February 2002 these certificates will also have to be endorsed in terms of STCW 95 by this Directorate apart from the issuing Administration. Information on the endorsement procedure to be adopted by this Directorate will be communicated in due course by another MSD Notice

Information as to how this Directorate will facilitate seafarers {at the management level} obtaining appropriate knowledge of relative Maltese maritime legislation will also be communicated by means of an MSD Notice.

The publications already referred to in this Notice contain extensive information on this topic. Companies and seafarers are urged to get well acquainted with the certification requirements of STCW 95.

### **Watch ratings certification**

Regulations II/4 and III/4 require that as from the 1 February 1997 every rating forming part of a navigation or an engineering watch must be duly certificated as meeting the minimum standard of competence specified in the relative sections A-II/4 and A-III/4 of the STCW Code.

Any rating required to be issued with a watch rating certificate, to comply with this requirement, may be assessed by the master or the chief engineer as appropriate and issued on board with a provisional watch rating certificate. These documents will be valid for not more than six months. After issue, the master should arrange, directly, or through the operators, for a copy of the provisional certificate accompanied by photocopies of documents to prove sea service, age and identity as well as details of the training courses

that the rating has undergone, to be sent to the Merchant Shipping Directorate before the expiry of the provisional certificate. On receipt of these documents the Directorate will record the details and issue a full watch rating certificate. Some ratings will already hold evidence issued by other Administrations confirming the holder as a qualified watch rating. These qualifications will be accepted by the Directorate for service on Maltese ships on the basis that the requirement for record keeping lies with the issuing Administration: such personnel need not be issued with a Maltese watch rating certificate.

### **Control Procedures**

STCW 95 contains more rigorous control procedures and expands the authority of Port State Control Officers to include on board assessment of the qualifications and competence of seafarers if they have clear grounds to believe that a seafarer lacks the ability to maintain the watchkeeping standards. The term clear grounds is, however, very broadly defined in Regulation 1/4 and might easily be applied by Port State Control Officers to most ships.

During on board assessment, seafarers can be required to demonstrate their competency at their place of duty. The Convention states that:

*Such demonstration may include verification that operational requirements in respect of watchkeeping standards have been met and that there is a proper response to emergency situations within the seafarer's level of competence.*

It is thus essential to ensure that the delayed requirements of STCW 95 are met at all times to avoid ships being detained or delayed.

As STCW 95 contains a substantial number of new requirements for the shipping industry,

companies are encouraged to keep abreast of developments connected to the implementation of the convention by, for example, following related publications.

Finally, this Directorate welcomes any response, particularly from companies and ship managers, regarding experiences in relation to the implementation of this Convention.

25 February 1997