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Marine Circular No. 03/2024

THE STCW CONVENTION AND THE ISSUE OF ENDORSEMENTS ATTESTING TO THE RECOGNITION OF A CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCY

**To: OWNERS, MANAGERS, CHARTERERS, CREWING AGENCIES AND MASTERS OF BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS SHIPS
(INCLUDING YACHTS).**

SUMMARY

In accordance with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping, 1978 ("STCW" or "STCW Convention"), officers onboard a British Virgin Islands ship are required to hold a Certificate of Competency (CoC) issued in accordance with STCW from a country whose standards of competency and training are considered to be equivalent to those of the United Kingdom.

In accordance with Regulation, I/10 of STCW, holders of such a CoC also require an endorsement from the Virgin Islands Shipping and Maritime Authority attesting to the acceptance of their CoC.

1. Introduction

1.1 This Marine Circular;

- gives the list of countries whose Certificates of Competency are considered acceptable for service as an officer on a British Virgin Islands ship.
- gives details of countries whose Seafarer Medical Certificates are considered suitable for a seafarer serving on a British Virgin Islands ship.
- specifies the required testing and standards for eyesight (including colour vision) for seafarers.
- outlines certain requirements for competence in the English language
- details the measures to be adopted to prevent drug or alcohol abuse;
- makes recommendations for the manning levels of pleasure vessels.
- outlines how certain seafarers can demonstrate adequate knowledge of British Virgin Islands laws and administrative procedures.
- highlights requirements in the STCW Convention in relation to the responsibilities of companies, the IGF Code and the Polar Code; and
- clarifies policy on the acceptance of on-line STCW training.

1.2 This Marine Circular is primarily intended for ships under the STCW and the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC). Nonetheless, Section 6 offers safe manning guidance for masters of pleasure vessels.

2. LIST OF COUNTRIES

2.1 Valid Certificates of Competency issued by the countries listed in the table below are acceptable for service as an officer on a British Virgin Islands ship. This list of countries will be updated from time to time and changes will be circulated by the reissue of this Marine Circular.

2.2 We only accept yacht CoCs issued by France, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand and United Kingdom – **(see Annex A for further details)**.

Certificates issuing Administration	Notes / Limitations
Algeria	-
Argentina -	Australia Certificates issued from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) only. State issued certificates are not accepted. Evidence of English is not required.
Azerbaijan -	-
Bangladesh	-
Belgium -	-
Brazil	
Bulgaria	
Canada	Evidence of English is not required.
Cape Verde	
Chile	Chile
China	
Croatia	
Cuba	
Cyprus	
Czech Republic	
Denmark	Croatia -
Ecuador	Cyprus -
Egypt	Denmark -
Estonia	Egypt -
Ethiopia -	Ethiopia -
Faroe Islands -	Fiji
Fiji	
Finland	
France	Some Yacht CoCs also accepted – See Annex A
Georgia	
Germany	-
Ghana	-
Greece	-
Hong Kong	Evidence of English is not required.

Hungary	Motorships Only.
Certificates issuing Administration	Notes / Limitations
Iceland	-
India	Evidence of English is not required.
Indonesia	-
Iran	Evidence of English is not required.
Ireland	Evidence of English is not required.
Italy	All Yacht CoCs also accepted – See Annex A
Jamaica	Evidence of English is not required.
Japan	-
Jordan	-
Korea, Republic of	-
Latvia	-
Lithuania	-
Madagascar	-
Malaysia	Evidence of English is not required.
Malta	Evidence of English is not required.
Mexico	-
Montenegro	-
Morocco	-
Myanmar	Evidence of English is not required.
Netherlands	All Yacht CoCs also accepted – See Annex A
New Zealand	Evidence of English is not required. Some Yacht CoCs also accepted – See Annex A
Norway	-
Oman	-
Pakistan	Evidence of English is not required.
Peru	-
Philippines	-
Poland	-
Portugal	-
Romania	-
Russia	-
Senegal	-
Serbia	
Singapore	Evidence of English is not required.
Slovenia	
South Africa	Evidence of English is not required.
Spain	
Sri Lanka	Evidence of English is not required.
Sweden	
Tunisia	
Turkey	
Ukraine	
Uruguay	
United Kingdom	Evidence of English is not required.
USA	Evidence of English is not required.
Vietnam	

- 2.3 When a country has employed the “Principles governing near-coastal voyages” (STCW I/3) when issuing a Certificate of Competency, any British Virgin Islands endorsement issued in recognition of such a certificate will be valid only for those same near-coastal voyages as the underlying Certificate of Competency.
- 2.4 The list of accepted countries may be periodically updated through the reissuance of this Marine Circular.

3. CERTIFICATES OF MEDICAL FITNESS

- 3.1 In accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Maritime Labour Convention) Regulations, 2019 all seafarers serving on British Virgin Islands ships are required to hold a valid medical certificate.
- 3.2 BVI Administration requires a UK ENG 1 seafarer medical fitness certificate, issued in accordance with the provisions of the MLC Regulations or the WIFC Regulations, by an MCA Approved Doctor listed on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mca-approved-doctors-overseas/mca-approved-doctors-overseas> , **optionally**;
- 3.3 Medical certificates issued by, or on behalf of, a country listed on the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) “STCW Whitelist” (the latest revision of IMO Circular MSC.1/Circ. 1163 refers), or a country which has ratified the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 are accepted for service on British Virgin Islands. Medical certificates issued by, or on behalf of, a country listed on the “STCW Whitelist” (the latest revision of IMO Circular MSC.1/Circ. 1163 refers) or a country which has ratified the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 are accepted for service on British Virgin Islands ships. Such certificates should be issued in accordance with Regulation I/9 of the STCW Convention and Section A-I/9 of the STCW Code.
- 3.4 The medical examination shall consist of a complete physical examination in accordance with the ILO/WHO publication entitled “**Guidelines for Conducting Pre-Sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examination for Seafarers**”.
- 3.5 The list of accepted countries may be updated from time to time by the reissue of this Marine Circular.
- 3.6 Medical certificates should clearly state that they are issued by, or on behalf of, the Governments of the above countries. It is insufficient to hold a certificate issued by a doctor residing in the above countries if the certificate is not issued, by or on behalf of, the Government of that country.
- 3.7 Medical certificates should state that the seafarer meets the minimum in-service eyesight standards for seafarers contained in Table A-I/9 of the STCW Code, noting that colour vision assessment only needs to be conducted every six years.

4. PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

- 4.1 It is a requirement that the officers on board a British Virgin Islands ship, both at operational and management level, and irrespective of the common language of the ship, have an appropriate level of proficiency in the English language, commensurate with the functions the officer is permitted to perform.
- 4.2 Officers do not need to demonstrate proficiency in the English language if their CoC was issued by countries where “Evidence of English is not required” is indicated in the “Notes” section of the table in Section 2, above.



5 MEASURES TO PREVENT DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE AND THE PREVENTION OF FATIGUE

5.1 Ships subject to the STCW Convention should implement measures for preventing the abuse of drugs and alcohol. These measures should ensure that no seafarer with a blood alcohol level greater than 0.05% (BAC) or 0.25mg/l alcohol in their breath is to perform any designated safety, security or marine environmental duties.

5.2 In addition to the limitations on working hours contained in both STCW and MLC2, seafarers are reminded of their duty to use their non work hours so that they are properly rested prior to commencing their next period of duty. Watchkeepers' attention is drawn to STCW A-VIII/19 to 23 and 56 to 58 regarding taking over a watch.

6 MANNING OF PLEASURE VESSELS

6.1 The master of every ship is responsible for the safety of the ship and those on board. This includes ensuring that manning of the ship is sufficient to safely execute any intended voyage.

6.2 Where there are no prescriptive manning requirements for a pleasure vessel, it is strongly recommended that the master ensures that the vessel is manned at the level that would be required for a similar vessel in commercial service.

7 KNOWLEDGE OF MARITIME LEGISLATION

7.1 Officers serving at the "management level" (masters, chief officers, chief engineers and second engineers) are required to have an appropriate knowledge of the maritime legislation of the Administration, relevant to the functions they are permitted to perform.

8 APPLYING FOR AN ENDORSEMENT ATTESTING TO THE RECOGNITION OF A COC

8.1 To apply for an endorsement attesting the recognition of a CoC, please visit the BVI SeafarerHQ online application system which can be accessed through the internet link: <https://bvi.seafarer.com/sign-in> or through the 'Customer Portal' in BVI Administration's website: <https://portal.bvimaritime.vg>

8.2 When applying for endorsements, candidates should make sure their applications are thoroughly completed and include electronic copies of all required supporting documents

8.3 Applicants should note that incomplete applications or missing supporting documents may result in significant processing delays.

9. THE POLAR AND IGF CODES

9.1 Since the "Manilla Amendments" to the STCW Convention entered into force, IMO has adopted the Polar Code and the Code of Safety for Ships using Gases or other Low-flashpoint Fuels (IGF Code). Both of these Codes require certain seafarers to hold Certificates of Proficiency when serving on –

- ships subject to the IGF Code (STCW V/3), and
- ships operating in polar waters (STCW V/4).



9.2 Seafarers responsible for designated safety duties associated with the care, use or emergency response to the fuel onboard ships subject to the **IGF Code** shall have;

- .2 have successfully completed the approved basic training required by STCW Regulation V/3, paragraph 5, in accordance with their capacity, duties and responsibilities as set out in STCW Code table A-V/3-1; and
- .3 be required to provide evidence that the required standard of competence has been achieved in accordance with the methods and the criteria for evaluating competence tabulated in columns 3 and 4 of STCW Code table A-V/3-1; or
- .4 have received appropriate training and certification according to the requirements for service on liquefied gas tankers as set out in regulation V/3, paragraph 6.

9.3 Every candidate for a certificate in **advanced training** for service on ships subject to the IGF Code shall;

- .1 have successfully completed the approved advanced training required by regulation V/3, paragraph 8 in accordance with their capacity, duties and responsibilities as set out in table A-V/3-2; and
- .2 provide evidence that the required standard of competence has been achieved in accordance with the methods and the criteria for evaluating competence tabulated in columns 3 and 4 of table A-V/3-2; or
- .3 have received appropriate training and certification according to the requirements for service on liquefied gas tankers as set out in regulation V/3, paragraph 9.

9.4 The following seafarers on ships operating, or intending to operate, in **polar waters**;

- (a) the master; (b) a chief mate; (c) an officer in charge of a navigational watch; must hold a certificate of proficiency in basic training for service on ships operating in polar waters when operating, or intending to operate, in the circumstances specified as requiring such qualification in paragraph 12.3.1 of chapter 12 of part 1-A of the Polar Code (manning and training) and STCW Regulation V/4, paragraph 2 (basic training for ships operating in polar waters).

9.5 Seafarers on a ship operating in polar waters – **advanced training**

- .1. A master and a chief mate on a ship operating, or intending to operate, in polar waters must hold a certificate of proficiency in advanced training for service on ships operating in polar waters when operating, or intending to operate, in the circumstances specified as requiring such qualification in paragraph 12.3.1 of chapter 12 of part 1-A of the Polar Code (manning and training).

9.6 Certificates of Proficiency issued under STCW V/3 or V/4 **do not require** recognition by the issue of an endorsement for service on a British Virgin Islands ship.

10. ON BOARD FAMILIARISATION TRAINING

10.1 Before being assigned shipboard duties, all seafarers are required to have received familiarisation training in accordance with Section A-VI/1 of the STCW Code.



11. REFRESHER TRAINING

11.1 Seafarers qualified in accordance with the training listed below shall be required (as applicable), every five years, to provide evidence of having maintained the required standard of competence, to undertake the tasks, duties, and responsibilities:

- Proficiency in Personal Survival Techniques, **STCW Table A-VI/1-1**;
- Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boats, other than Fast Rescue Boats, **STCW Table A-VI/2-1**;
- Proficiency in Fast Rescue Boats, **STCW Table A-VI/2-2**;
- Proficiency in Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting, **STCW Table A-VI/1-2**;
- Proficiency in Advanced Fire Fighting, **STCW Table A-VI/3**
- Passenger ship Crowd Management training, **STCW A-V/2 para. 3**
- Crisis Management and Human Behaviour **STCW A-V/2 para 4**

12. RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMPANIES

12.1 As well as placing responsibilities on masters and other seafarers, the STCW Convention also places responsibilities on the owners / managers of ships subject to STCW. The obligations are outlined in STCW I/14 and are reflected in British Virgin Islands legislation.

12.2 In summary, these obligations relate to –

- ensuring seafarers assigned to any of its ships are appropriately qualified in accordance with the STCW Convention;
- ensuring its ships are manned in accordance with the applicable minimum safe manning document;
- seafarers receiving the appropriate refresher and updating training;
- full, readily available, records of seafarers being maintained (see STCW I/14.4 for details of the information to be recorded);
- ensuring seafarers are properly familiarised when assigned to its ships;
- ensuring effective coordination of the ship's complement in emergency situations and when performing safety, security and pollution prevention duties; and
- ensuring that there is an effective means of oral communication on board.

13. WATCHKEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

13.1 In addition to the measure to prevent fatigue in Section 5 above, Masters are required to ensure that the principles of keeping a safe watch outlined in STCW A-VIII are implemented on board.

13.2 Such measures include –

- The principles contained in STCW A-VIII/2 Part 4-1 in relation to a navigation watch;
- The principles contained in STCW A-VIII/2 Part 4-2 in relation to an engineering watch;
- The principles contained in STCW A-VIII/2 Part 4-3 in relation to a radio watch; and
- The principles contained in STCW A-VIII/2 Part 5 in relation to watchkeeping in port.

14 STCW COURSE APPROVAL AND ONLINE TRAINING

14.1 Following the growth of online training, we would like to clarify that we do not consider online distance learning to adequately cover the practical requirements as detailed in STCW Code 1978 (as amended) Sect A-VI/1. To simplify, we have produced the



following table which clarifies which STCW online training courses may be accepted for service onboard our vessels.

14.2 The following table also details which approval is required i.e., certificates issued under the authority of any IMO 'Whitelist' country, (MSC.1/Circ.1163/Rev.13, as amended) or certificates to be issued under the authority of a Country listed in Section 2 of this notice.

Recognition of STCW Training Courses for Service onboard Virgin Islands vessels			
STCW Course (including Refresher Training unless stated)	STCW Code	Online training accepted	Certificates issued under the authority of any IMO 'White List' country (MSC.1/Circ.1163/Rev.13-as amended)
Personal Survival Techniques	Table A-VI/1-1	N	Y
Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting	Table A-VI/1-2	N	Y
Elementary First Aid	Table A-VI/1-3	N	Y
Personal Safety and Social Responsibility	Table A-VI/1-4	Y	Y
Proficiency in Security Awareness	Table A-VI/6-1	Y	Y
Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boats	Table A-VI/2-1	N	Y
Proficiency in Fast Rescue Boats	Table A-VI/2-2	N	Y
Advanced Fire Fighting	Table A-VI/3	N	Y
Advanced Fire Fighting - Refresher only	Table A-VI/3	Y	Y
Medical First Aid	Table A-VI/4-1	N	Y
Medical Care	Table A-VI/4-2	N	Y
Basic Oil and Chemical Tanker Training	Table A-V/1-1-1	Y	N*
Basic Liquefied Gas Tanker Training	Table A-V/1-2-1	Y	N*
Advanced Oil/Chemical Training	Table A-V/1-12/3	Y	N*
Advanced Liquefied Gas Tanker Training	Table A-V/1-2-2	Y	N*
Proficiency for Seafarers with Designated Security Duties	Table A-VI/6-2	Y	Y
Proficiency for Ship Security Officers	Table A-VI/5	Y	Y
Crowd Management Training	Table A-V/2-1	Y	Y
Crisis Management and Human Behaviour Training	Table A-V/2-2	Y	Y
Passenger Safety, Cargo Safety and Hull Integrity Training for Ro-Ro Passenger Ships	Sect A-V/2.5	Y	Y
Polar Code Basic	Table A-V/4-1	Y	Y



Polar Code Advanced	Table A-V/4-2	Y	Y
Basic IGF (International Code of Safety for Ships Using Gases or Other Low-Flashpoint Fuels)	Table A-V/3-1	Y	N*
Advanced IGF (International Code of Safety for Ships Using Gases or Other Low-Flashpoint Fuels)	Table A-V/3-2	N	N*

N* - Certificates to be issued under the authority of a Country listed in Section 2

Annex A

The following yacht certificates are accepted for an endorsement by the Virgin Islands Shipping & Maritime Authority:

- **United Kingdom Yacht Certificates** - All CoCs limited to yachts or sailing ships are accepted.

- **French Yacht Certificates**

Deck

Master 3000 GT (yacht)	
Master 500 GT (yacht)	
Master 200 GT (yacht)	
Chief Officer 500 GT (yacht)	
Chief Officer 200 GT (Yacht)	
Yacht 500 GT Watchkeeping Officer	
Master 200 GT (Sailing yacht)	

Note: French engineering Yacht CoCs are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

- **New Zealand Yacht Certificates**

Master (yacht) 3000 GT
Master (yacht) 500 GT
OOW (yacht) 3000 GT

- **The Netherlands Yacht Certificates** - All CoCs limited to yachts or sailing ships are accepted.

- **Italian Yacht Certificates** - All CoCs limited to yachts or sailing ships are accepted.

**Director,
Virgin Islands Shipping & Maritime Authority**

