



TECHNICAL CIRCULAR No. 249 of 15th February 2015

To:	All Surveyors/Auditors
Applicable to flag:	All Flags
Subject:	Polar Code- training standards
Reference:	IMO STCW

Exclusive IMO Sets Polar Code Training Standards

During last week's IMO Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW 2) in London, details were finalized that will set the stage for amendments to the STCW Convention with respect to training and certification of deck officers and masters required under the Polar Code. Once approved, the amendments to Chapter V of STCW will include requirements for sea service, certification, revalidation, transitional provisions and minimum standards of training for deck officers and masters serving on vessels operating in polar waters.

In all likelihood the sections of the Polar Code that require SOLAS and MARPOL amendment will come into force 01 January 2017, but the training requirements to be enabled by STCW may not enter into force until one year later on 01 January 2018 due to committee and council meeting schedules.

If HTW 2's recommendation for early adoption is accepted, entry into force of these STCW-related provisions could be moved forward to match that of the SOLAS and MARPOL provisions.

Better Understanding of Training Requirements

Regardless of the effective date, there is now a better understanding of the nature of the requirements that must be met by deck officers and masters onboard ships operating in polar waters once Part I-A Safety, Chapter 12 is in force. Under the new regime, deck officers and masters may be required to undergo training at either a basic or advanced level depending on the vessel, the ice conditions and their position. The STCW amendments will meet this requirement through a training and certification process.

Customer Service Center

5201 Blue Lagoon Drive, 9TH. Floor,
Miami, Fl., 33126
Tel: 1 (305) 716 4116,
Fax: 1 (305) 716 4117,
E-Mail:

joel@conarinagroup.com

Technical Head Office

7111 Dekadine Ct.
Spring, Tx., 77379
Tel: 1 (281) 370 9363,
1 (713) 204 6380

E-Mail: tho@conarinagroup.com,

houston@conarinagroup.com

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The Basic Polar Waters Certificate of Proficiency will be issued to deck officers after successful completion of an approved basic course and proof of meeting the standard of competence specified in section A-V/4 of STCW. No sea service is required to obtain the Basic Certificate of Proficiency.

To obtain the Advanced Polar Waters Certificate of Proficiency, the officer must have previously met the requirements for certification in basic training in polar waters, then obtained at least two months approved seagoing service in the deck department at management level or while watchkeeping in an operational level within polar waters or approved equivalent seagoing service, AND have completed approved advanced training and met the standards of competence specified in section A-V/4 of STCW.

In line with STCW 1/11 requirements for other certificates of proficiency, both of these certificates will require revalidation every five years.

Transitional Period

During the transitional period as the new requirements gradually come into force, allowance will be made for deck officers and masters to obtain interim certificates of proficiency that will be permitted until two years after entry into force of these provisions.

In order to obtain a Basic Certificate of Proficiency, a seafarer holding a current STCW Certificate of Competency must have completed sea service of three months in the preceding five years in polar waters or approved equivalent seagoing service, or attended a training course meeting training guidance provided in Section B-V/g of STCW.

To obtain an Advanced Certificate of Proficiency, a senior deck officer or master with a current STCW Certificate of Competency must have commenced approved sea service in polar waters PRIOR to [the date of entry into force] and shall establish that they meet the competency requirements by having completed at least three months sea service at a management level in the previous five years in polar waters or approved equivalent seagoing service; OR having attended a training course AND completed two months sea service in polar waters or approved equivalent seagoing service.

In the background of these certification requirements, tables have been finalized outlining the minimum standards of training and competency that must be met for both the basic and advanced levels. These tables will form the basis of approved model courses that will be developed in the coming months.

The Polar Code is the IMO's first mandatory collection of requirements covering many aspects of shipping in polar waters. A number of non-mandatory IMO guidelines for ships operating in Arctic and Antarctic waters have existed since the mid-Nineties.

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Tel: 1 (281) 370 9363,
1 (713) 204 6380

E-Mail: tho@conarinagroup.com,
houston@conarinagroup.com

REFERENCES:

- IMO STCW Ch. V

ATTACHMENTS: No.

Kindest Regards,
Cosmin Bozenovici
Naval Architect – Conarina Technical Head Office

Customer Service Center

5201 Blue Lagoon Drive, 9TH. Floor,
Miami, Fl., 33126
Tel: 1 (305) 716 4116,
Fax: 1 (305) 716 4117,
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