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HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Minimum Safe Manning

To : Shipowners, Ship Managers and Ship Masters

Summary

The implementation of STCW 95 and the publication of the Assembly Resolution A.890(21) as amended by A.955(23), by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have brought about changes to the assessment of minimum safe manning for Hong Kong registered ships. Effective from the date of issue of this Merchant Shipping Information Note, the owners and ship managers of Hong Kong registered ships are required to make their own assessment of the numbers and grades of crew necessary for the safe operation and the security of the ships and apply for the issue of Minimum Safe Manning (MSM) Certificate. The application will be assessed in accordance with the principles laid down in A.890(21) as amended by A.955(23). If this Administration is satisfied with the proposed crew level, an MSM Certificate will be issued to the ship. The applicant must complete the application form prior to submitting it for the assessment.

This Note supersedes the Hong Kong Merchant Shipping Information Note No. 40/2004 issued on 30 November 2004.

Introduction

1. The implementation of STCW 95 and the publication of the Assembly Resolution A.890(21) as amended by A.955(23) by the IMO has brought about changes to the assessment of minimum safe manning for Hong Kong registered ships. Previously, the Marine Department had specified minimum number of crew and the grades of certificates which should be held for ships with different types of equipment. The international changes have prompted the Department to take a non prescriptive approach to determine the scale of minimum safe manning.

2. The owner or ship manager of a Hong Kong registered ship is required to make an assessment of the numbers and grades of crew necessary for the safe operation and the security of the ship. The manning on board should be sufficient to ensure that:

- (a) the required watchkeeping standard can be maintained;
- (b) the officers and the ratings can perform their duties in accordance with the provisions of the approved Ship's Security Plan (SSP) and the framework of operational guidance section A-VIII of the STCW Code;
- (c) personnel are not required to work more hours than is safe in relation to the safety and the security of the ship; and
- (d) the officers and ratings are not required to work such hours or under such condition which may be injurious to their health and safety.

3. Proposals based on the assessment should be submitted to the Senior Surveyor of Ships, Cargo Ships Safety Section for consideration. In the event that this Department is not satisfied with the proposals put forward by the owner or ship manager, a new scale will be proposed by the Department. In case where the owner or ship manager disagrees with the counter proposal, they can invite a surveyor of the Department for a practical demonstration of the crew to carry out the essential tasks in the context of the principles of safe manning under their proposal. However, the cost of such assessment would be borne by the owners or operators.

4. Similarly, in the event of any change in the equipment, construction, use of the ship or the provisions of the approved SSP which may affect the safe manning scale, the owner or ship manager should make an application for the issue of a new safe manning document.

Determination of Safe Manning Levels

Principles of Safe Manning

5. This Department will consider a ship to be safely manned if there are sufficient crew with appropriate skill and experience to ensure that the following guiding principles are fulfilled:

- (a) the ability to:
 - (i) maintain safe navigational, engineering and radio watches in accordance with regulation VIII/2 of the annex of STCW 95, as amended, and also maintain general surveillance to the ship;
 - (ii) moor and unmoor the ship safely;
 - (iii) manage the safety functions of the ship when employed in a stationary or near-stationary mode at sea;
 - (iv) perform operations, as appropriate, for the prevention of damage to the marine environment;
 - (v) maintain the safety arrangements and the cleanliness of all accessible spaces to minimize the risk of fire;
 - (vi) provide for medical care on board ship;
 - (vii) ensure safe carriage of cargo during transit;
 - (viii) inspect and maintain, as appropriate, the structural integrity of the ship; and
 - (ix) operate in accordance with the approved SSP.

- (b) the ability to:
 - (i) operate all watertight closing arrangements and maintain them in effective condition, and also deploy a competent damage control party;
 - (ii) operate all onboard firefighting and emergency equipment and lifesaving appliances, carry out such maintenance of these equipment as is required to be done at sea, and muster and disembark all persons on board; and
 - (iii) operate the main propulsion and auxiliary machinery and maintain them in a safe condition to enable the ship to overcome the foreseeable perils of the voyage.

6. In considering the fulfilments of the above principles, the owners and ship managers should take into account the following factors:

- (a) the length and nature of voyage and trading area;
- (b) any special requirements of the trade involved;
- (c) number, size and type of main propulsion units and auxiliaries;
- (d) size of ship;
- (e) construction and technical equipment of ship; and
- (f) the provisions of the approved SSP.

Application for a Minimum Safe Manning Certificate

7. The application form for a Minimum Safe Manning Certificate is available from Marine Department web site http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/forms/pdf/msmc_app.pdf. The owner or ship manager shall assess the proposed manning scale and they should:

- (a) identify all the functions to be undertaken on board during a representative voyage;
- (b) identify the skill and experience required to perform those functions;
- (c) identify those functions in normal operations which need to be undertaken concurrently;
- (d) determine the minimum number of crew required to undertake concurrent operations safely and to carry out security duties in accordance with the approved SSP;
- (e) ensure the working arrangements with respect to the skill and training of the crew are capable of undertaking concurrent and continuous operations; and
- (f) ensure that the working arrangements allow for sufficient rest periods to avoid fatigue.

8. The number of officers, who are required by the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Certification of Officers) Regulation, should be taken into consideration in assessing the proposed manning scale.

9. To assist ship owners/managers to apply for the Minimum Safe Manning Certificate, please refer to the guidance on the application in Annex I attached to this Note.

10. To assist ship owners/managers to recruit and promote seafarers, please refer to the guidelines and recommendations for seafarers' recruitment and promotion consideration in Annex II attached to this Note.

11. Shipowners or ship managers should submit the signed application form together with the following documents to Cargo Ships Safety Section at 24/F, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong, by facsimile to Fax. No. (+852) 2545 0556 or by E-mail: ss_css@mardep.gov.hk.

(a) Mooring Arrangement Plan or General Arrangement for the cargo vessel in question; and

(b) UMS Certificate, if applicable.

12. Whenever there is a need to re-issue a Minimum Safe Manning Certificate, the obsolete copy should be returned to Cargo Ships Safety Section for cancellation.

Enquiries

13. Enquiries arising from this Note should be directed to the Senior Surveyor of Ships/Cargo Ships Safety Section, at 24/F., Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong Tel. No. (852) 2852 4510, Fax No: (852) 2545 0556 or E-mail: ss_css@mardep.gov.hk.

Marine Department
Shipping Division

11 November 2009