Frequent Asked Questions (FAQs)
Cargo Ships Safety Section

1. I am a newly established shipping company. How I can start operating Hong Kong flag vessel?

   The International Management Code for the Safe Operation of Ships and for Pollution Prevention (ISM Code) requires the ship owners or ship managers to set up a safety management system if they are responsible for operating the vessels. If you are the company operating Hong Kong flag vessel, you then need to obtain both the Hong Kong (i) Document of Compliance (DOC), (ii) Safety Management Certificate (SMC) to confirm the effectiveness of the safety management system both ashore and on board before operating Hong Kong flag vessel in order to satisfy the ISM requirement.

   For more detailed information you may visit this link (https://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/msnote/pdf/msin0934.pdf).

2. Which section in Marine Department may handle my enquiry on ISM matter?

   Cargo Ships Safety (CSS) Section of Marine Department is responsible for handling the enquiry on ISM matter. You could contact CSS section by the following e-mail address (mms@mardep.gov.hk) or telephone (852) 2852 4510.

3. How can I obtain the DOC and SMC for operating Hong Kong vessels?

   Hong Kong Marine Department (MD) is responsible for the assessment, issue and renewal of ISM Certificates and their periodic verification relating to passenger ships. MD will not involve directly in the ISM certification and verification work relating to cargo ships. The following Recognized Organizations (ROs) are authorized by MD to carry out statutory audits and issuance of DOC and SMC for Hong Kong registered cargo vessels and their companies:

(i)   American Bureau of Shipping (ABS);

(ii)   Bureau Veritas SA (BV);

(iii) China Classification Society (CCS);

(iv) DNV AS (DNV);

(v)   Korean Register (KR);

(vi) Lloyd's Register Group Limited (LR);

(vii) Nippon Kaiji Kyokai (NK);

(viii) RINA Services S.p.A (RINA); and

(ix) Russian Maritime Register of Shipping (RS)

You may contact the RO directly for certification and verification process.

4. Could I ask more than one RO for the issuance of Hong Kong DOC?

No! Each company is only allowed to hold one Hong Kong DOC issued by any one of the ROs listed above.

5. Now I got the Hong Kong DOC and started to operate Hong Kong vessel. What else should I need to do in order to satisfy the requirement of MD?

The management company should submit the company information including correspondence address (telephone number, fax number and e-mail address etc.), DPA (Designated Person Ashore) and CSO (Company Security Officer) contact information together with copies of DOC and SMC, if any, to CSS Section of MD. The information/documents can be submitted by fax to (852) 2545 0556 or by e-mail to mms@mardep.gov.hk. MD has also prepared the DPA and CSO contact form for the company to fill in as per attached.

6. Would MD also like to take part in periodic ISM activities?

MD would like to participate the immediate periodical DOC verification with RO for each new shipping company joining Hong

Kong flag. There will be no charge for MD's audit participation. The company is required to notify MD as earliest as possible for arranging MD surveyor to participate the audit.

7. ISM Code 3.1 states that "if the entity who is responsible for the operation of the ship is other than the owner, the owner must report the full name and details of such entity to the Administration". Is there any specified form I need to fill in?

   MD has not specified any particular form for making the declaration. However, in order to ease the owner's concern, MD had devised a declaration form as per attached. The owner could decide by himself whether adopting the form or not. Please be reminded that the declaration must be made by the owner and not someone else.

8. Do I need to get the reply receipt from MD for owner declaration in order to comply with the ISM requirement?

   ISM Code has not specified the need for getting the receipt of owner declaration from the Administration, so do MD. However MD would, as usual, acknowledge the receipt of owner declaration in the convenient way i.e. by return e-mail in order to settle the owner's concern.

9. My company's head office is located in city A and there is a branch office in city B to support ship management activities. There is also a branch office in city C to support account and finance activities. Do I need to include these branch offices in my company DOC?

   Any branch office has ISM function(s), that branch office should be stated on the DOC and subject to both internal and external audit. However, if a branch office does not have any ISM function, it is not necessary to include in the DOC.

10. My company is currently holding a Hong Kong DOC; or has been holding a Hong Kong DOC during the past one year; may I apply for a second Hong Kong DOC by using a different company name?

Except those for routine operational needs (e.g. company changes name, etc.), the company or the RO should seek approval from MD. MD may require submission of further justifications such as information of management personnel, organization, office address, SMS manuals and reasons for a second HK-DOC for consideration.