



INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR PERSONNEL ON SHIPS OPERATING IN POLAR WATERS

Amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, were developed to support the requirement for training in the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code).

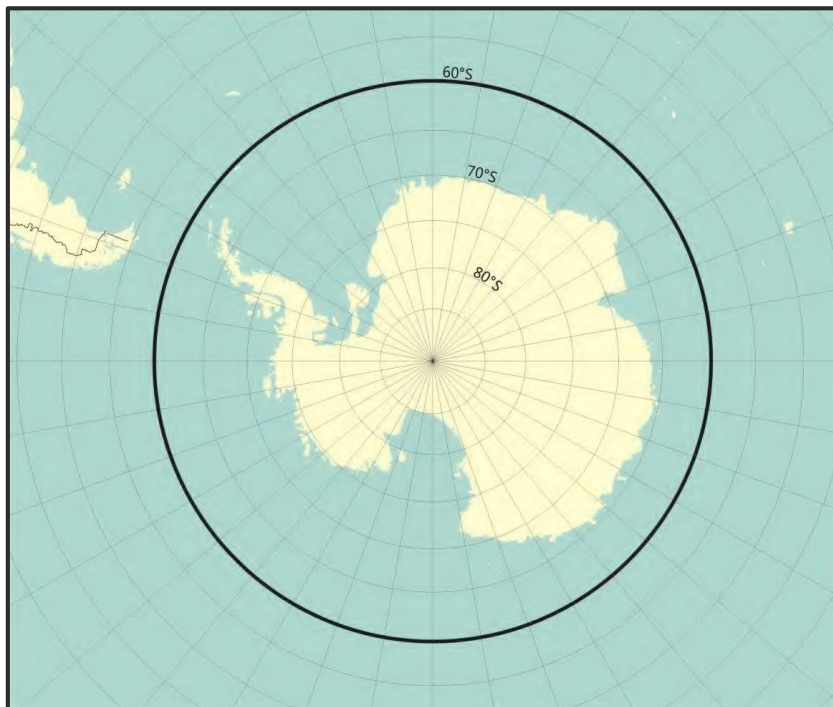
The purpose of this document is to provide information and guidance on the special training requirements for personnel on ships operating in polar waters. It is intended to assist shipowners and operators with preparations for compliance with the Polar Code and the associated training and certification requirements in the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended.

BACKGROUND

The Polar Code was developed to supplement existing IMO instruments in order to increase the safety of ship operations and protect the environment in the polar regions. It addresses design, construction, equipment, training, search and rescue and environmental protection matters relevant to ships operating in the waters surrounding the two poles. As a result of the entry into force of the related amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the Polar Code entered into force on **1 January 2017**.

The Polar Code applies to ships operating in *polar waters*, defined as meaning “*Arctic waters and/or the Antarctic area*”. The *Antarctic area* means the sea area south of latitude 60°S, with the meaning of *Arctic waters* defined in detail in SOLAS regulation XIV/1.3.¹

¹ *Arctic waters* means those waters which are located north of a line from the latitude 58°00′.0 N and longitude 042°00′.0 W to latitude 64°37′.0 N, longitude 035°27′.0 W and thence by a rhumb line to latitude 67°03′.9 N, longitude 026°33′.4 W and thence by a rhumb line to the latitude 70°49′.56 N and longitude 008°59′.61 W (Sørkapp, Jan Mayen) and by the southern shore of Jan Mayen to 73°31′.6 N and 019°01′.0 E by the Island of Bjørnøya, and thence by a great circle line to the latitude 68°38′.29 N and longitude 043°23′.08 E (Cap Kanin Nos) and hence by the northern shore of the Asian Continent eastward to the Bering Strait and thence from the Bering Strait westward to latitude 60° N as far as Il'pyrskiy and following the 60th North parallel eastward as far as and including Etolin Strait and thence by the northern shore of the North American continent as far south as latitude 60° N and thence eastward along parallel of latitude 60° N, to longitude 056°37′.1 W and thence to the latitude 58°00′.0 N, longitude 042°00′.0 W.



Figures above are provided in the Polar Code to illustrate the maximum extent of *Arctic waters* and *Antarctic area* application.

The Polar Code applies to ships (both new ships and existing ships) operating in *polar waters*, certified in accordance with chapter I of SOLAS. Ships with **keel laying dates on or after 1 January 2017 are considered new ships**, and **ships constructed before 1 January 2017 are considered existing ships**. Ships constructed before 1 January 2017 shall meet the relevant requirements of the Polar Code by the first intermediate or renewal survey, whichever occurs first, after **1 January 2018** (SOLAS regulation XIV/2.2).

The Polar Code consists of an Introduction, and parts I and II. The Introduction to the Polar Code contains mandatory provisions applicable to both parts I and II. Part I is subdivided into part I-A, which contains mandatory provisions on safety measures, and part I-B containing recommendations on safety. Part II is subdivided into part II-A, which contains mandatory provisions on pollution prevention, and part II-B containing recommendations on pollution prevention.

Every ship to which the Polar Code applies must have on board a valid Polar Ship Certificate, which is issued after an initial or renewal survey to a ship which complies with the relevant requirements of the Polar Code.² It certifies that a ship has been surveyed in accordance with the applicable safety-related provisions of the Polar Code and provides relevant particulars of the ship, including *inter alia* ship type and restrictions related to types of waters/ice conditions.

The Polar Code requires ships subject to the Polar Code to carry a Polar Water Operational Manual (PWOM). The goal of the PWOM is to provide the owner, operator, Master and crew with sufficient information regarding the ship's operational capabilities and limitations in order to support their decision-making process (see Chapter 2 of the Polar Code).

Chapter 12 of the Polar Code addresses the training of personnel and manning of ships operating in polar waters to ensure that ships are appropriately manned by adequately qualified, trained and experienced personnel. Every crew member is required to be familiar with the procedures and equipment contained or referenced in the ship's PWOM relevant to their assigned duties.³ Companies are to ensure that Masters, chief mates and officers in charge of a navigational watch on board ships operating in polar waters have completed training to attain the abilities that are appropriate to the capacity to be filled and duties and responsibilities to be taken up, taking into account the provisions of the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended.

Masters, chief mates and officers in charge of a navigational watch are to be qualified in accordance with chapter V of the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended, and a table is provided specifying the appropriate level of training required by the Polar Code.⁴

² SOLAS regulation XIV/2.2 does not specify the statutory certificate to which the applicability provision is linked, therefore the date by which a ship is to comply with the Polar Code will depend on the type of ship and the certificates it is ordinarily issued. Consequently, IMO has since developed unified interpretations of SOLAS regulation XIV/2.2 and paragraphs 1.3.2 and 1.3.6, part I-A of the Polar Code (see MSC.1/Circ.1562).

³ See paragraph 12.3.4 of the Polar Code.

⁴ See paragraph 12.3.1 of the Polar Code.

Ice conditions	Tankers	Passenger ships	Other
Ice free *	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Open waters **	Basic training for master, chief mate and officers in charge of a navigational watch	Basic training for master, chief mate and officers in charge of a navigational watch	Not applicable
Other waters ***	Advanced training for master and chief mate	Advanced training for master and chief mate	Advanced training for master and chief mate
	Basic training for officers in charge of a navigational watch	Basic training for officers in charge of a navigational watch	Basic training for officers in charge of a navigational watch

* *Ice free waters* means no ice present. If ice of any kind is present, this term shall not be used (see the WMO Sea Ice Nomenclature).

** *Open waters* means a large area of freely navigable water in which sea ice is present in concentrations less than 1/10.

*** *Other waters* means, based on deduction, those with ice concentration of 1/10 or over.

The Polar Code provides that the Administration may allow the use of a person(s) other than the Master, chief mate or officers of the navigational watch to satisfy the requirements for training (i.e. an ice navigator) provided certain requirements are met (see paragraph 12.3.2 of the Polar Code).

FAMILIARIZATION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Existing guidance in the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended, is found in **Section B-V/g** of the STCW Code regarding the training of Masters and officers (both those in charge of navigational and engineering watches) for ships operating in polar waters. The guidance refers to the existing IMO *Guidelines for ships operating in polar waters* (A.1024(26)).

To support the functional requirement for training in Chapter 12 of the Polar Code, new mandatory minimum requirements for the training and qualifications of Masters and deck officers on ships operating in polar waters were developed for Chapter V of the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended. The requirements will be set out in **Regulation V/4** of the STCW Convention and detailed in **Section A-V/4** of the STCW Code. It is anticipated that these amendments will enter into force on **1 July 2018**.⁵

⁵ Regulation V/4 shall be deemed to have been accepted on 1 January 2018, unless, prior to that date, more than one third of STCW Parties or Parties the combined merchant fleets of which constitute not less than 50% of the gross tonnage of the world's

The training requirements apply to Masters, chief mates and officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships operating in polar waters in accordance with the table specifying the appropriate level of training required in Chapter 12 of the Polar Code.⁶ Consequently, the applicability of the training requirements requires concurrent consideration of the relevant provisions of the Polar Code and Regulation V/4.

The new requirements establish two levels of training and resulting certification:

- Certificate in Basic Training for ships operating in polar waters
- Certificate in Advanced Training for ships operating in polar waters

A Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) will be issued to persons qualified in accordance with the requirements. CoPs may be issued by training providers and there is no requirement that they be issued by Administrations.

CoPs issued under Regulation V/4 are not required to be issued with endorsements attesting to the recognition of the certificate (i.e. flag State endorsement).

BASIC TRAINING

When required by the Polar Code, Masters, chief mates and officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships operating in polar waters are to hold the CoP in Basic Training for ships operating in polar waters.

Every candidate for the CoP in Basic Training for ships operating in polar waters shall have completed an approved basic training course. There are no special seagoing service or experience requirements for this level of training.

ADVANCED TRAINING

When required by the Polar Code, Masters and chief mates on ships operating in polar waters are to hold the CoP in Advanced Training for ships operating in polar waters.

Every candidate for the CoP in Advanced Training for ships operating in polar waters is to:

- Meet the requirements for certification in Basic Training for ships in polar waters;

merchant shipping of ships of 100 gross register tons or more, have notified the Secretary-General of the IMO of their objections to the amendments.

⁶ The reference to “ships operating in polar waters” and “as required by the Polar Code”, as well as the accompanying definitions of “Polar Code” and “polar waters” being part of the amendments for inclusion in the list of definitions found in **Regulation I/1** of the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended, means that the applicability of the training and qualification requirements are limited to ships subject to the Polar Code.

- Have at least **2 months of approved seagoing service** in the deck department, at management level or while performing watchkeeping duties at the operational level, within polar waters or other equivalent approved seagoing service;⁷ and
- Have completed **approved advanced training** for ships operating in polar waters and meet the standard of competence specified in the STCW Code.

Since the specification of the appropriate level of training for personnel is “*as required by the Polar Code*”, there are waters/ice conditions envisaged in Chapter 12 of the Polar Code where Masters and chief mates may only be required to hold CoPs in basic training for ships operating in polar waters (e.g. on ships operating in “*open waters*”), or no special qualification at all related to ships operating in polar waters at all (e.g. on ships operating in “*ice free waters*”).

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

Until 1 July 2020, seafarers who commenced approved seagoing service in polar waters prior to 1 July 2018 shall be able to establish that they meet the requirements for the CoP in Basic Training for ships operating in polar waters by:

- Having completed approved seagoing service on board a ship operating in polar waters or equivalent approved seagoing service, performing duties in the deck department at the operational or management level, for a period of at least 3 months in total during the preceding 5 years; or
- Having successfully completed a training course meeting the training guidance established by the IMO for ships operating in polar waters.*

** Refer to Section B-V/g of the STCW Code.*

Until 1 July 2020, seafarers who commenced approved seagoing service in polar waters prior to 1 July 2018 shall be able to establish that they meet the requirements for the CoP in Advanced Training for ships operating in polar waters by:

- Having completed approved seagoing service on board a ship operating in polar waters or equivalent approved seagoing service, performing duties in the deck department at management level, for a period of at least 3 months in total during the preceding 5 years; or
- Having successfully completed a training course meeting the training guidance established by the IMO for ships operating in polar waters* and having completed approved seagoing service on board a ship operating in polar waters or equivalent approved seagoing service, performing duties in the deck department at the management level, for a period of at least 2 months in total during the preceding 5 years.

** Refer to Section B-V/g of the STCW Code.*

⁷ Administrations will determine what will be considered and accepted as “equivalent approved seagoing service”. There may be different interpretations by Administrations. Operators may wish to verify applicable requirements and/or the determinations by their Administration(s).

CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS

Masters, chief mates or officers in charge of navigational watch, for continuing seagoing service on board ships operating in polar waters, at intervals not exceeding 5 years, will be required to establish continued professional competence for ships operating in polar waters (see Regulation I/11 and Section A-I/11).

Continued professional competence for Masters, chief mates or officers in charge of navigational watch on board ships operating in polar waters, may be established by:

- Approved seagoing service, performing functions appropriate to the certificate held, for a period of at least two months in total during the preceding five years; or
- Having performed functions considered to be equivalent to the seagoing service required in the first point above; or
- Passing an approved test; or
- Successfully completing an approved training course or courses.

COMPLIANCE

With the Polar Code having entered into force on 1 January 2017, and the amendments to the STCW Convention and Code expected to enter into force on 1 July 2018, there may be a gap period for some ships as a result of the entry into force dates. The existence of a gap period is important to note because compliance with requirements of the Polar Code, including the functional requirement for training set out in Chapter 12, is not required prior to the survey and issuance of a Polar Ship Certificate (i.e. the ship becoming subject to the Polar Code). There are two circumstances where a gap period may exist:

1. Where a new ship subject to the Polar Code is issued with a Polar Ship Certificate prior to 1 July 2018 (entry into force of Regulation V/4); and
2. Where an existing ship becomes subject to the Polar Code and is issued with a Polar Ship certificate as a result of its intermediate or renewal survey after 1 January 2018 occurring before 1 July 2018 (anticipated entry into force of Regulation V/4).

Having identified and recognized the potential for a gap period for some ships, text was added to the IMO resolution adopting the amendments to provide guidance on compliance with the training requirements of the Polar Code during the period between the dates of entry into force.⁸ It emphasizes the importance of timely actions related to implementation and preparations for compliance by various stakeholders:

NOTING that there will be a transitional period between the entry into force of the Polar Code and the amendments to the STCW Convention, and that section B-V/g of the STCW Code provides guidance regarding the training of masters and officers for ships operating in polar waters which should be applied by administrations during the transitional period;

URGES Parties to implement the amendments to regulation I/1.1, regulation I/11 and regulation V/4 at an early stage;

INVITES Parties to recognize seafarers' certificates issued by a Party at an early stage, in accordance with paragraph 4 above, and prior to the entry into force of amendments to regulation V/4.

PREPARATIONS BY SHIPOWNERS AND OPERATORS

Companies operating ships in polar waters⁹

Companies operating ships in polar waters will be required, upon their ships becoming subject to the Polar Code (i.e. holding Polar Ship Certificates), to ensure they are manned with qualified and certificated personnel in accordance with Chapter 12 of the Polar Code and the training requirements set out in Regulation V/4 of the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended. These personnel may be:

- Personnel qualified and certificated in accordance with the new training requirements for service on ships operating in polar waters (Regulation V/4), having successfully completed approved training and provided evidence of meeting seagoing service and experience requirements (as applicable); or
- Personnel qualified and certificated in accordance with existing national training requirements for service on ships operating in polar waters (e.g. courses in accordance with the guidance in Section B-V/g), who can (or will) have their qualifications and certification recognized in accordance with the transitional provisions in Regulation V/4.

⁸ Despite the text included in the IMO Resolution, it should be understood that the term “recognize” refers to the acceptance of persons holding certificates issued by other Parties and not the practice of flag States issuing endorsements attesting to the recognition of certificates (i.e. flag State endorsements) under Regulation I/10. There is no requirement for flag State endorsements for the certificates to be issued in accordance with Regulation V/4.

⁹ “Polar waters” is defined in the amendments to the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended, in Regulation I/1 as “Arctic waters and/or the Antarctic area, as defined in SOLAS regulations XIV/1.2 to XIV/1.4”.

To ensure applicable personnel are qualified and certificated to operate ships in polar waters, companies should consider, *inter alia*, the following efforts and actions:

- Identify the requirements of their Administration emanating from implementation of the Polar Code, specifically the manning and training requirements (Chapter 12) and associated amendments to the STCW Convention, 1978, as amended (Regulation V/4);
- Consult with the relevant Administration about whether personnel completing training courses/programmes meeting the provisions of the guidance found in Section B-V/g of the STCW Code (e.g. existing national training courses/programmes) would be sufficient training for service on ships operating in polar waters;
- Identify the Masters and deck officers on board their ships that will be required to be qualified and certificated in accordance with Regulation V/4 and identify the appropriate levels of training, taking into account the specific ship types and operations;
- Consider the existing training completed related to operations in polar waters, certificates held or previous seagoing service by Masters and deck officer on board their ships to identify those who may require further training and the appropriate qualification routes to obtain the requisite certificates;
- Consider approaches to ensuring applicable personnel are able to obtain the approved seagoing service required for the appropriate certificate (either within polar waters or equivalent approved seagoing service);
- Consider existing or introduce arrangements or procedures for Masters and deck officers on board ships to record relevant seagoing service (within polar waters or equivalent approved seagoing service) and experience;
- Consider the availability of approved training courses and issuance of certificates, consulting with the relevant Administrations and training providers, as necessary, to ensure the timely approval and availability of courses;
- Facilitate the attendance of applicable personnel at training courses and completion of relevant seagoing service and experience to meet the requirements for certification; and
- Consult with their Administration on the use of a person(s) other than the Master, chief mate or officers of the navigational watch to satisfy the requirements for training (i.e. an ice navigator) under the Polar Code, such as in view of the particular operations of their ships in polar waters or if difficulties are envisaged for applicable personnel to obtain the requisite certificates.