
Local Passenger Vessels: Manning

Notice to Shipowners, Ship masters and Surveyors.

This Marine Guidance Notice supplements paragraph 16 of Merchant Shipping Notice M1525, and should be read in conjunction with MGN 203(M).

Summary

This guidance note:-

- explains the existing statutory requirement for the operator of a passenger vessel to ensure that sufficient crew are on board for the safe and efficient operation of the vessel.
- gives new guidance on how operators may determine and MCA will assess a safe level of manning for a local passenger vessel (Class IV V, VI or VI(A) or EC Class C or D (restricted));
- deals with the manning levels necessary for dealing with an emergency situation; and
- sets out the factors to be taken into account, and how they may be applied.

1. Introduction

1.1 Under the Merchant Shipping (Local Passenger Vessels) (Masters' Licences and Hours, Manning and Training) Regulations 1993, the owner of a local passenger vessel has a duty to notify the Secretary of State (in practice the appropriate Marine Office of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency) how many crew, in addition to the master, are needed for the navigation of the vessel.

1.2 In the Interim Report from the Thames Safety Inquiry, Lord Justice Clarke made the following recommendation (27.11):

"The Department should review the current manning requirements for Class V passenger vessels operating in the Inquiry area, with a view to considering whether they are sufficient to ensure the safety of passengers in the event of an emergency arising (such as a fire or a collision)."

1.3 In response to this recommendation, a Working Group of the Class V Operators Sub-Committee of London District Marine Safety Committee produced a matrix approach to determining manning levels, taking account of a range of factors. A trial was carried out nationally. This Guidance Note is the result of that trial and discussions on the benefits and limitations of the system that was tested.

1.4 This Guidance Note has been agreed with the Domestic Passenger Ship Steering Group.

2. Use of this Guidance:

2.1 This guidance makes no change to the current requirements regarding manning on domestic passenger ships, nor to arrangements for MCA approval of minimum crew numbers on these vessels.

- 2.2 Safe manning of the vessel is the operator's responsibility, based on their assessment of risks and the characteristics of the vessel.
- 2.3 This guidance aims to explain how crewing levels may be determined, and provides flexibility, by creating an auditable trail for different manning levels when the vessel operates under different conditions (eg variable passenger numbers, functions or tripping, day or nighttime operation).
- 2.4 The MCA will use this guidance to evaluate proposals for minimum manning levels from operators. Application of the guidance will need to take into account the wide range of size, design and equipment on vessels to which it applies.
- 2.5 Manning levels may be validated by emergency drills.
- 2.6 The minimum crew for a passenger ship is two - ie the master plus one other.
- 2.7 If asked to do so, the MCA will consider a sliding scale of crew depending on the number of passengers carried. The passenger certificate may show the minimum manning levels, or allow variations for day time and night time operation or vary according to the number of passengers carried.
- 2.8 Depending on the particular constraints of the vessel concerned, it may be necessary to make certain other modifications to the operating conditions (eg shutting off an enclosed passenger space) to ensure emergency procedures can be conducted by the smaller crew.

3. Factors to be considered:

- 3.1 The following list of factors, which may not be exhaustive, should be considered when determining the appropriate number of crew for a passenger vessel. This is driven primarily by the need to ensure that all passengers can be kept informed and remain under supervision in the event of an emergency.

(a) Passenger numbers

- It must be possible to inform, instruct and control all passengers with the crew available.

(b) Survivability standard

- In the event of a collision, this will determine the likelihood of having to evacuate the vessel and the time available for evacuation.

(c) Night operation

- Communication with passengers over distance will be more difficult at night, with greater scope for confusion;
- Availability of assistance from other vessels, and their response time, may also be different at night from during the day.

(d) Number of passenger spaces

- Enabling passengers to hear/see instructions and reassurance from crew, and instructions from rescue services, ensuring the vessel is cleared
- One crew member for each space should normally be expected; however if, because of the layout of the vessel, one person can communicate effectively with passengers in more than one space at one time, this may not be essential.

Definition of passenger space: - "a discrete area, in normal passenger use, which is either an enclosed space, or, if an open space, has a floor area of at least 6m²."

(e) Functions

- This takes account of random location of passengers, and the effects of noise and alcohol, which will reduce the ability of crew members to attract and keep the attention of passengers.

Definition of function: "a private event at which passengers are not seated in an orderly fashion".

(f) Fixed fire extinguishing system in enclosed engine spaces

- The engine space is the area of highest fire risk on most vessels. If it is possible to control a fire in the engine space without a member of the crew having to enter the space, that releases at least one crew member for other safety duties. It will also increase the time available for evacuation.

(g) Geographical limits of operation

- This will affect the availability of rescue services, and the availability of assistance from other vessels.

District Marine Safety Committees or Local SAR Committees may have/may wish to compile a list of waterways in their area which records the arrangements in place for assistance (including the presence of other, well-equipped vessels).

- 3.2 In the light of these factors, the owner must assess the number of crew, in addition to the master, appropriate for that vessel. The owner must also consider whether it is appropriate that one of the crew, in addition to the master, should hold a Boatmaster's Licence of any grade, or other relevant certification (eg a first aid certificate).
- 3.3 The owner must then notify the Marine Office dealing with his passenger certificate. The number of crew must be acceptable to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency before the passenger certificate is issued. The agreed number of crew will be shown on the certificate and may vary according to the number of passengers carried at any one time. Variations may also be allowed for day time and night time operation. The certificate will specify the date on which it takes effect and will include any conditions on which it is given.
- 3.4 All crew members who are part of the minimum number of crew should have the appropriate level of safety training - see MGN 203(M).

4. Use of the matrix:

- 4.1 The matrix developed by the London District Marine Safety Committee (see paragraph 1.3) has been trialled in some other areas of the country and found to be applicable. The local Marine Office will inform operators if the matrix is in use in their area.
- 4.2 The matrix provides for a consistent approach to crew numbers, though it is recognized that it cannot take all circumstances into account and therefore rigid application is not always appropriate.

5. Special circumstances:

- 5.1 The owner should keep manning levels under review. There may be circumstances where additional staff are required - such as a charter requiring more involvement of crew in the catering arrangements or where passengers have special needs. If in doubt, in these circumstances it is advisable to discuss the situation with the Marine Office.

6. Further Information

Further information on the contents of this Notice can be obtained from:

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