



Training & Certification Guidance: UK Requirements for Radio Operators

Notice to all Owners, Masters, Officers, Ratings and those concerned with maritime training.

This notice replaces MGN 214

Summary

This Merchant Shipping Notice (MSN) outlines the examination and training requirements for the certification of radio personnel onboard Merchant vessels.

This MSN covers:

1. Introduction
2. Certification, Training and Examination Requirements
3. The GMDSS STCW Endorsement
4. The Revalidation of an STCW Endorsement
5. Applications for STCW Endorsements
6. Company Responsibilities
7. Training of Maintenance of GMDSS Installations Training
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Merchant Shipping (Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping) Regulations 2015, implement the requirements of the International Convention and Code on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch-keeping (STCW) 1978, as amended (referred to in this MSN as the 'STCW Convention' and 'STCW Code' respectively), including the provisions prescribing the mandatory minimum requirements for certification of radio personnel appointed for distress and safety communication purposes in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Merchant shipping (Radio installations) Regulations 1998 (hereafter known as the Radio Regulations). The Radio Regulations implement, in the United Kingdom, Chapter IV of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974 (SOLAS).



1.2 In the United Kingdom the issue of Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) certification is delegated to the Association of Marine Electronic and Radio Colleges (AMERC).

1.3 AMERC oversees the provision and delivery of courses leading to examinations for the GMDSS certificates issued by the United Kingdom (UK) Government. Once approved by the Association, centres in membership are authorised to provide courses in GMDSS operation and techniques. Quality assurance for these courses is managed on behalf of the MCA by AMERC's Chief Examiner and administered through the National Administration Centre. Examination Co-ordination Centres (ECC) provide trained examiners to conduct the GMDSS examinations at AMERC-approved examination venues.

2. Certification, Training and Examination Requirements

2.1 If you are applying for a Certificate of Competency as a deck officer or are the person in charge of or performing radio duties on a ship, you must have completed approved education and training and meet the standards of competence specified in section A-IV/2 of the STCW Code.

2.2 All radio operators serving on UK registered ships, in accordance with the Radio Regulations, must reach the required vocational and academic standards as specified in section A-IV/2 of the STCW Code and hold one of the following suitably endorsed radio certificates of competency:

- Restricted Operator's Certificate (ROC) to operate in sea area A1; **or**
- A General Operator's Certificate (GOC)¹ to operate in any sea area A1 to A4.

2.3 For the issue of a deck officer Certificate of Competency (COC) you must hold either a GMDSS GOC¹ or, for some near coastal Certificates of Competency, a GMDSS Restricted Operators Certificate (ROC).

2.4 To qualify for your UK GMDSS certificate you must:

- Be at least 18 years old;
- Have completed a GMDSS GOC¹ or ROC AMERC approved course and passed the examinations, demonstrating the standards of competence specified in section A-IV/2 of the STCW Code.

2.5 On satisfactory completion of the training, and having passed the AMERC examinations you will be issued with the appropriate GMDSS certificate. For the availability of courses, commencement dates, fees and examinations you should refer to the AMERC website www.amerc.ac.uk or your chosen nautical college.

2.6 In order to comply with the requirements of the STCW Convention and to perform the radio communications function onboard ships, all GMDSS certificates must be endorsed by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

¹ In addition to the GOC and ROC, AMERC also issue two superior certificates: a First-class Radioelectronic certificate and a Second-class Radioelectronic Certificate. If you hold either of these certificates you have met the required level of competence to operate the GMDSS. You will still need to obtain an STCW endorsement to operate the GMDSS at sea.



The MCA accepts some GMDSS certificates issued by other administrations for the use on UK ships. A list of accepted GMDSS certificates can be found in Annex A. This list is subject to change so you should refer to the website for the current list: www.gov.uk and search "GMDSS". You will need to apply for an UK Authority to Operate (ATO), enabling you to use your non-UK GMDSS certificate onboard UK ships. Please refer to MSN 1867 for further information.

3. The GMDSS STCW Endorsement

3.1 To obtain a UK STCW endorsement for your GMDSS you must meet the following requirements:

- (a) Hold AMERC-issued GMDSS GOC¹ or ROC;
- (b) Hold basic STCW safety training certificates:
 - Personal Survival Techniques (STCW Code A-VI/1-1),
 - Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting (STCW Code A-VI/1-2),
 - Elementary First Aid (STCW Code A-VI/1-3),
 - Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities (STCW Code A-VI/1-4);

(c) Hold a valid ENG1 (medical fitness certificate) or accepted equivalent.

3.2 Holders of valid UK deck, engineer and electro-technical STCW Certificates of Competency valid for seagoing service will not be required to produce evidence of the STCW safety training certificates listed above by virtue of the training undertaken to obtain their Certificates of Competency.

From 1 January 2017 Personal Survival Techniques and Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting must have been completed or updated within the last 5 years. For further information please refer to MSN 1865.

3.3 The MCA-issued STCW endorsement will be valid from a period of five years from the date of issue.

To continue to work at sea as a radio operator your MCA issued STCW endorsement for a UK GOC and ROC must be revalidated every five years.

4. The Revalidation of an STCW Endorsement

4.1 If you hold a GMDSS GOC or ROC, in order to revalidate your STCW endorsement you must provide documentary evidence of:

- (a) Completing a minimum of:
 - 12 months' seagoing service within the last 5 years immediately prior to making an application to revalidate your STCW endorsement **or**
 - At least 30 months' service in an acceptable occupation in the 5 years immediately prior to making an application to revalidate your STCW endorsement (see Annex B);

(b) Hold a valid ENG1 (medical fitness certificate) or accepted equivalent.

4.2 If you are unable to meet the revalidation requirements listed above, you must demonstrate to the MCA that you are competent to return to sea by submitting the following documents:



(a) An ENG1 (medical fitness certificate) or accepted equivalent;

(b) Either:

- The basic STCW safety training certificates:
 - Personal Survival Techniques (STCW Code A-VI/1-1),
 - Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting (STCW Code A-VI/1-2),
 - Elementary First Aid (STCW Code A-VI/1-3),
 - Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities (STCW Code A-VI/1-4)**or**
- A UK Certificate of Competency valid for seagoing service.

4.3 From 1 January 2017, Personal Survival Techniques and Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting must have been completed or updated within the last 5 years. For further information please refer to MSN 1865.

5. Applications for STCW Endorsements

5.1 The application form MSF 4354 describes the procedure, process and fee (if applicable) to obtain or revalidate a UK STCW endorsement for your GMDSS certificate. You must complete the application form and submit it to the MCA with the relevant fee and required documents. The application form is available to download from our website, go to www.gov.uk and search "MSF 4354".

5.2 All supporting evidence must be in the form of original documents **or** attested photocopies. Attestation can be completed by any one of the following:

- A Notary Public (UK or foreign);
- A holder of a UK Master Certificate of Competency;
- MCA approved nautical colleges;
- Your maritime administration;
- Another MCA approved organisation.

Attested copies must be clear, legible and to scale.

5.3 Seagoing service must be documented in one of the following:

- Merchant Navy Discharge Book;
- Seagoing Service Testimonials;
- Certificates of Discharge;
- Professional Yachtsmen's Association (PYA);
- Similar MCA approved service record book.

5.4 If you are applying for the revalidation of a GMDSS STCW endorsement by virtue of an acceptable occupation, you must submit an **ORIGINAL** company letter stating your role, responsibilities and length of service within the last five years.

5.5 If you meet the qualifying conditions applicable to either the initial STCW endorsement or the revalidation of an STCW endorsement, your GMDSS will be valid for seagoing service for a period of five years from date of issue or will be synchronised to the expiry date of your Certificate of Competency.



5.6 If you hold a UK Certificate of Competency your GMDSS certificate should be submitted with your NOE pass or Certificate of Competency revalidation application so the expiry dates can be synchronised.

6. Company Responsibilities

6.1 In conforming to the provisions of Regulation 1/14 of the STCW Convention and section A-1/14 of the STCW Code, a company must ensure that: seafarers assigned to any of its ships have received refresher and updating training as required by the Convention (Ref: STCW Code Regulation I/14).

6.2 Companies should provide ship-specific introductory programmes aimed at assisting newly employed seafarers to familiarise themselves with all procedures and equipment relating to their areas of responsibility. Companies should also ensure that personnel who may be required to operate the GMDSS equipment receive GMDSS familiarisation training, on joining the ship and at appropriate intervals thereafter.

7. Training of Maintenance of GMDSS Installations

7.1 Regulation 16 Chapter IV of the SOLAS '74, Regulation 18 of the Radio Regulations and Merchant Shipping Notice MSN 1690 (M) allow for the use of 'at-sea electronic maintenance capability' to ensure the availability of radio equipment, as required.

7.2 A person designated to perform at-sea electronic maintenance is required to hold:

- An appropriate certificate as specified by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Radio Regulations and as referred to in STCW Code B-IV/2, **or**
- Have equivalent at-sea electronic maintenance qualifications. Further information and details of suitable training courses may be obtained from the AMERC website: www.amerc.ac.uk.

8. Vessel Requirements

8.1 A summary of the required Radio Certification, depending on vessel type and area of operation, is summarised in the table in Annex C.



More Information

Seafarer Training and Certification
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Bay 2/11
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

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General Inquiries: infoline@mcga.gov.uk

MCA Website Address: www.dft.gov.uk/mca

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Accepted GMDSS Certificates toward the issue of a UK Deck Certificate of Competency

EU & CEPT Countries	CEPT Countries	Countries – Rest of the World
Austria	Iceland	Australia
Belgium	Liechtenstein	Canada
Bulgaria	Norway	China
Cyprus	Russian Federation	Hong Kong
Croatia	Switzerland	India
Czech Republic	Turkey	Jamaica
Denmark	Ukraine	Myanmar
Estonia		New Zealand
Finland		Philippines
France		Singapore
Germany		South Africa
Greece		Trinidad & Tobago
Hungary		
Ireland		
Italy		
Latvia		
Lithuania		
Luxembourg		
Malta		
Netherlands		
Poland		
Portugal		
Romania		
Slovakia		
Slovenia		
Spain		
Sweden		

This list is subject to change so you must check our website for an up to date list prior to making an application for a UK Certificate of Competency: www.gov.uk and search "GMDSS".



Acceptable occupations for the revalidation of the GMDSS endorsement

The STCW Convention provides for the acceptance of a Master's or officer's continued proficiency by virtue of them having performed duties relating to the functions appropriate to the class or grade of certificate they hold, when such duties are considered to be at least equivalent to the seagoing service required for revalidation. A list of occupations which will be favourably considered is given below. The list is not exhaustive and applications from certificate holders engaged in other occupations may also be considered. Applications for revalidation may be made by certificate holders who have been engaged in the listed occupations for at least two and a half of the preceding five years:

- Marine Pilots;
- MCA surveyors;
- MCA Coastguards;
- Marine college lecturers;
- Technical, engineering and marine superintendents or ship repair managers;
- Harbour Masters;
- Hydrographic surveyors;
- Classification Society marine surveyors.



Guidance on the Requirements for Vessels

Guidance on Certification Requirements according to Vessel Type		
Type of Vessel	A2, A3 and A4 Sea Area	A1 Sea Area
All passenger ships	GOC	ROC
Cargo ship over 300 GT	GOC	ROC
Cargo ship under 300 GT	LRC or GOC	SRC or ROC

Sea Area A1: An area within the radiotelephone coverage of at least one VHF coast station in which continuous digital selective calling (Ch.70/156.525 MHz) alerting and radiotelephony services are available.

Sea Area A2: An area, excluding sea area A1, within the radiotelephone coverage of at least one MF coast station in which continuous DSC (2187.5 kHz) alerting and radiotelephony services are available.

Sea Area A3: In area, excluding sea areas A1 and A2, within the coverage of an Inmarsat geostationary satellite. This area lies between about latitude 76 Degrees North and South, but excludes A1 and/or A2 designated areas. Inmarsat guarantees their system will work between 70 South and 70 North though it will often work to 76 degrees South or North.

Sea Area A4: An area outside sea areas A1, A2 and A3 is called sea area A4. This is essentially the Polar Regions, north and south of about 70 degrees of latitude, excluding any A1 or A2 areas.

LRC: Long Range Certificate is an operator's certificate, examined to European Radiocommunication Committee (ERC) Recommendation T/R 31-05, covering MF/HF/VHF GMDSS and non-GMDSS techniques and operation for operators in the voluntary radio fit sector and operators on commercial vessels not subject to compulsory radio fitment under the SOLAS 1974 Convention. A supplementary examination (the Satellite Module) in satellite communication techniques and operation, including GMDSS techniques, is also available as part of this certificate

SRC: The Short Range Certificate is the minimum qualification required by law to control the operation of VHF and VHF Digital Selective Calling (DSC) equipment on any British flagged vessel voluntarily fitted with a radio. This includes both fixed and hand held equipment using International channels. The issue of this Certificate is delegated to The Royal Yachting Association. For further information please visit their website: www.rya.org.uk

A Radio Operator's Certificate should be suitable for the radio equipment fitted onboard in accordance with the area of operation (A1, A2, A3 or A4). For example, if a vessel is operating in sea area A1 but is fitted with sea area A2 radio equipment, then the person in charge of the radio equipment must hold a GOC. An officer with an ROC could only operate the equipment if supervised by a GOC holder.



Additional Information

(1) Personnel working aboard oil rig platforms are not regulated under the STCW Convention and therefore do not need to complete the GMDSS revalidation procedure. If you require a revalidation you must comply with the requirements in section 5 of this MSN.

(2) Radio operators working onboard Mobile Offshore Drilling Units (MODU) or Floating Production Storage Offtake (FPSO) with a minimum of 12 months' service in the preceding 5 years can apply for GMDSS revalidation. If you fulfil these criteria, evidence of your service must be supplied in support of your application and submitted as a company letter on company headed notepaper. Offshore Medical Fitness Certificates are not recognised and an ENG1 or accepted equivalent must be submitted

