



Maritime &  
Coastguard  
Agency

## MARINE INFORMATION NOTE

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# MIN 688 (M) Amendment 2 Code of safe working practices for merchant seafarers: (COSWP) 2024 Edition

Notice to all shipowners, ship operators, managers, masters and seafarers.

This notice replaces MIN 688 (M) Amendment 1.

This MIN expires 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

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## Summary

This notice provides details of the 2024 amendments to the code of safe working practices for merchant seafarers (“the Code”, also “COSWP”).

The code covers the regulatory framework and provides best practice guidance for health and safety on board ship. It also gives guidance on safety management and identifies statutory duties underlying the advice and includes practical information for safe working on board.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The new edition of the code of safe working practices for merchant seafarers (“the code”) was issued on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024 after consultation with industry.

1.2 The code is an authoritative best practice manual on health and safety on board ships and is endorsed by the National Maritime Occupational Health and Safety Committee (NMOHSC). It deals with the regulatory framework for health and safety on board ship, safety management and statutory duties underlying the advice and gives practical information on safe working.

## 2. Amendments

2.1 Following stakeholder engagement and review by the COSWP Working Group, which consists of representatives of the shipping industry, seafarers and seafarers’ unions in collaboration with MCA policy leads, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency have redesigned and modernised the Code to improve its structure, ensure consistency and simplify its language. The use of recurring design features will enable quicker reference and generally aid understanding, making it clearer and easier to follow. A glossary has also been added.

2.2 In addition, there is a change in the physical format of the document from loose-leaf to bound. Inserting a yearly amendment to replace outdated content took an average of one hour of administrative time per update, per code. Over the years and for the many copies held within some companies, this is a significant cost. In addition, having the latest and best guidance relies on ensuring all amendments are updated annually. The intention is to improve the end-user experience, remove the yearly manual updating process and seek a more cost-effective solution, as well as making it easier for shipowners to ensure they are using the latest copy of the Code. This solution is also sustainable, as determined by an impact assessment.

2.3 Usually this MIN details changes to COSWP, however that has not been done due to the nature and scale of changes in this edition. Although language and structure has been altered, there are no significant changes to the safety guidance provided. This MIN will provide details of all changes made to future editions.

### **3. GOV.UK digital version**

3.1 Work is ongoing to provide an effective digital offering for the industry.

3.2 A version of the code is available on gov.uk for information purposes. This version complies with central government policy on accessibility. The document includes the text and images from the COSWP 2024 edition.

It does not match the published version and is intended for online reference only; it is not suitable for onboard use and inspection.

The fully designed published version is available to purchase from [tsoshop.co.uk](https://tsoshop.co.uk)

3.3 Going forward, the MCA propose to produce chapter summaries with useful information, which would include when content was last updated and links to the most current MCA marine notices and governmental legislation referenced. Comments are welcomed on this proposal, please email [seafarersafety@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:seafarersafety@mcga.gov.uk).

### **4. COSWP review 2025**

4.1 COSWP has developed since its publication in 2015 to become an internationally recognised maritime industry standard of best practice. Therefore, we will continue to review the code insuring content remains relevant and updated.

4.2 Several stages of consultation with representatives of industry and seafarers will be scheduled over the next 12 months to review the content within the code. Notification to industry will be made nearer the time. For further information, please contact [seafarersafety@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:seafarersafety@mcga.gov.uk).

## More information

Seafarer Safety and Health Branch  
Maritime and Coastguard Agency  
Bay 2/17  
Spring Place  
105 Commercial Road  
Southampton  
SO15 1EG

Telephone: +44 (0)203 81 72250

Email: [seafarersafety@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:seafarersafety@mcga.gov.uk)

Website: [www.gov.uk/mca](http://www.gov.uk/mca)

Please note that all addresses and telephone numbers are correct at time of publishing.