



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

MARINE GUIDANCE NOTE

MGN 590 (M+F) Amendment 2 Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention, 1978 as amended Manila Amendments: Alcohol Limits

Notice to all shipowners, employers, masters and seafarers.

This notice replaces MGN 590 (M+F) Amendment 1.

Summary

This notice explains the current alcohol limits for seafarers set by the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention, 1978 as amended (STCW) and applies to all seafarers, including those on fishing vessels.

Amendment 2 updates contact information only.

1. Background

1.1 The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping 1978, as amended (STCW), was further amended in June 2010 (“the Manila amendments”). Regulation VIII/1, Code A-VIII/1 and B-VIII/1 brought in new provisions on fitness for duty – alcohol limits.

1.2 This MGN explains those provisions as they apply to UK ships.

2. Change in alcohol limits for seafarers

2.1 Any level of alcohol consumption by crew members on board a ship has implications for the safety of the vessel, the crew and any passengers. Even small quantities of alcohol have been shown to sufficiently impair judgment and increase the risk of accidents.

2.2 It is an offence for a professional seafarer to be impaired by drink (or drugs) whilst on duty on board a ship or at any time on board a vessel if they might be required to undertake emergency duties to protect the safety of passengers.

2.3 Among the Manila amendments were provisions introducing mandatory alcohol limits within STCW Regulation VIII/1 (Fitness for Duty) of 0.05% for blood and 0.25 mg/l for breath. The UK amended its existing alcohol limits, contained within the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003, to bring them into line with the Manila amendments through the Merchant Shipping (Alcohol) (Prescribed Limits Amendment) Regulations 2015. These apply to professional mariners on all UK-flagged ships and to any ship operating in UK waters.

2.4 The limits for alcohol in the blood prescribed in UK legislation are expressed differently and the table below sets out the STCW and UK limits in both notations to show how they correspond. Ships operating internationally will need to ensure that they are aware of, and comply with, these limits.

Limit	STCW Regulation VIII/1	Railway and Transport Safety Act 2003
Blood	0.05%	50 milligrams in 100 milliliters
Breath	0.25 milligrams per litre	25 micrograms in 100 milliliters
Urine	N/A	67 milligrams in 100 milliliters

2.5 The Manila amendments also included a recommendation that all companies should consider the implementation of a clearly written policy of drug and alcohol abuse prevention including a prohibition on the consumption of alcohol four hours prior to serving as a member of a watch. Guidance on introducing such policies has been produced by the UK's National Maritime Occupational Health and Safety Committee

More information

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