



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

MARINE INFORMATION NOTE

MIN 688 (M) Amendment 3 Code of safe working practices for merchant seafarers: (COSWP) 2025 Edition

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

This notice replaces MIN 688 (M) Amendment 2.

This MIN expires 31st March 2026.

Summary

This notice provides details of the 2025 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 24th March 2025 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 Inserting a yearly amendment to replace outdated content took an average of one hour of administrative time per update, per code.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. The following table summarises the changes that have occurred for the 2025 edition of the Code, 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.

2.3 In addition, in various chapters references have been updated and typographical corrections made (not detailed below).

3. Table of Amendments 2025

3.1 Chapter 11 safe movement on board ship

2024 Amendment Title / Section Number (old reference if altered)	2025 Amendment Paragraph Number (new reference if altered)
	11.8.5
11.11 Adverse weather. 11.11.1, 11.11.2, 11.11.3, 11.11.4, 11.11.5, 11.11.6, 11.11.7, 11.11.8.	11.11 Adverse weather. 11.11.1, 11.11.2, 11.11.3.
	11.12 Movement of a ship in a rough seaway.
	11.13 Conditions of extreme cold.
	11.14 Conditions of extreme heat.

3.1.1 Reason for chapter 11 2025 amendments; comments from stakeholder engagement exercise and chapter sections updated to reflect the new entry into Movement of a ship in a rough seaway and conditions of extreme weather.

3.2 Chapter 12 Noise, vibration and other physical agents

2024 Amendment Title / Section Number (old reference if altered)	2025 Amendment Paragraph Number (new reference if altered)
	12.14.1 Mitigation: hand-arm vibration

3.2.1 Reason for chapter 12 2025 amendment; comments from stakeholder engagement exercise to include an image.

3.3 Chapter 22 Boarding arrangements

2024 Amendment Title / Section Number (old reference if altered)	2025 Amendment Paragraph Number (new reference if altered)
	22.2 General principles

3.3.1 Reason for chapter 22 amendment: comment from stakeholder engagement exercise. Removing gangways and accommodation ladders may permit a deterioration in maintenance. This point has been re-worded.

3.4 Chapter 34 Shipyard safety

2024 Amendment Title / Section Number (old reference if altered)	2025 Amendment Paragraph Number (new reference if altered)
	Chapter 34 Shipyard safety

3.4.1 Reason for chapter 34 inclusion: Following a request from the MAIB and comments from the stakeholder engagement exercise a new chapter on Shipyard safety was deemed necessary to help with awareness to unexpected and unfamiliar risks when ships are in the shipyard.

3.5 Annex 1.3 Risk assessment form: Example 1

2024 Amendment Title / Section Number (old reference if altered)	2025 Amendment Paragraph Number (new reference if altered)
	Annex 1.3, Example 1

3.4.1 Reason for Annex 1.3 amendment: Comment from stakeholder engagement exercise requesting the extension of the table in Example 1 to include 'Further risk' column.

4. GOV.UK digital version

4.1 Work is ongoing to provide an effective digital offering for the industry. We are currently conducting a survey to explore COSWP e-learning, if you would like to take part or have any other comments regarding this then please contact us at seafarersafety@mcga.gov.uk

4.2 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 2025 edition.

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

4.3 The fully designed published version is available to purchase from tsoshop.co.uk

5. COSWP review 2025

5.1 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.

5.2 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

More information

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