



SUB-COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING
33rd session
Agenda item 16

STW 33/INF.5
16 November 2001
ENGLISH ONLY

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**STCW CODE - PART A – REVIEW OF PROVISION FOR VISUAL SIGNALLING
BY FLASHING LIGHT USING MORSE CODE**

TABLE A-II/1

Submitted by Canada

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	The Canadian Administration wishes to identify factors that interact to reduce the likelihood of maintaining competence in using the Morse code for extended messaging through the flashing light signalling method. The paper further recommends reducing the required level of competence in using the Morse code through the flashing light signalling method, to that necessary for distress and single letter signalling for ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications.
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 3
<i>Related documents:</i>	Annexed text

1 In accordance with the provisional agenda laid out for the thirty-third session of the Sub-Committee on STW, Agenda item 16, this Review paper from the Canadian Administration, as given in the annexed text, addresses issues of flashing light signalling using the Morse code.

2 The Government of Canada is of the opinion that a guidance item should be considered for insertion in the STCW Code – Part B relating to the competence in visual signalling identified in STCW Code – Part A, to clarify the extent to which the need for message transmission and reception by flashing light using Morse Code may be reduced to single letter and distress signals, with no reference to words-per-minute.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

3 The Sub-Committee is invited to take note of the above, consider the annexed text and decide as appropriate.

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ANNEX**Review of the STCW Code Provision concerning Visual Signalling
by Flashing Light using Morse Code****FACTORS**

In practice, it appears that the flashing light method of transmitting and receiving text messages, using the Morse Code, has been supplanted by text and voice communications using various grades of INMARSAT and other equipment used to support the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).

There remains the requirement to identify distress signals in the tables in the STCW Code, Chapter II.

The International Code of Signals, 1969, as amended (INTERCO), still permits the use of any method of transmitting single letter signals. By its very nature, the use of visual signalling is limited to line-of-sight communications. In this instance, the use of voice communications over radio and single-letter signals using flags are options that predominate. It is not essential to use the flashing light signalling method to transmit and receive extended messages using the Morse code. It is therefore unlikely that competence can be maintained at the level of initial certification without artificially enforcing its use aboard ship.

The introduction of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) is intended to allow for not only positive identification but also for transmission of additional information.

CONCLUSION

That the competence in visual signalling using the Morse code, identified in Table A-II/1, could be reduced to that required by recognition of distress and single letter signals. The current examination practice of four words per minute of using the Morse code is not serving the advancement of safety at sea.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That a guidance item should be considered for insertion in the STCW Code – Part B relating to the competence in visual signalling identified in STCW Code – Part A, to clarify the extent to which the need for message transmission and reception by flashing light using Morse Code may be reduced to single letter and distress signals, with no reference to words-per-minute.

That, as an option to the guidance item, Administrations be permitted to establish the level of competence to single letter and distress signals, with no reference to words-per-minute, to comply with the intent of Resolution 2, paragraph 3.1, as to keeping the provisions of parts A and B of the STCW Code under review.

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