



CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON
STANDARDS OF TRAINING,
CERTIFICATION AND WATCHKEEPING
FOR SEAFARERS, 1978
Agenda item 6 and 7

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**CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION ON STANDARDS OF TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND
WATCHKEEPING FOR SEAFARERS, 1978**

**CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO THE SEAFARERS'
TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND WATCHKEEPING (STCW) CODE**

Medical standards

**Submitted by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia,
Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania,
Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia,
Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Commission**

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This document proposes amendments to regulation I/9 and related parts of the Code regarding medical standards
<i>Strategic direction:</i>	5
<i>High-level action:</i>	5.2
<i>Planned output:</i>	5.2.2.1
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 12
<i>Related documents:</i>	STW 38/17, annex 11; STW 39/7/11; STW 41/7/46, STW 41/16 and STCW/CONF.2/3, 2/4 and 2/5

Background

1 The Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping at its forty-first session (11 to 15 January 2010) (STW 41), considered the draft amended text for regulation I/9 and related parts of the Code regarding medical standards.

2 In this context, STW 41 approved the text of the draft amendments to the relevant provisions of the Convention as set out in documents STCW/CONF.2/3, STCW/CONF.2/4 and STCW/CONF.2/5 for consideration by the Diplomatic Conference, with a view to adoption.

Discussion and Proposals

Nature of the minimum medical fitness standards

3 STW 41 agreed that the table regarding minimum eyesight standards (table A-I/9-1), with some amendments included in the draft text, would be of a mandatory application and as such remain in part A of the Code.

However, as regards the minimum physical abilities standards (table A-I/9-2), views were shared about whether these standards should be mandatory and remain in part A of the Code or recommendatory and thus be placed in part B of the Code. Following lengthy discussions, the Sub-Committee agreed to retain the text in part A in square brackets for a decision by the Conference and invited Governments to submit comments and proposals.

4 In the light of this disagreement and in the interest of facilitating progress, the co-sponsors of this submission reviewed their position with regard to mandatory standards as regards physical abilities (as last presented in document STW 41/7/46).

They consider therefore that it is essential to provide for an unambiguous, mandatory basis for seafarer medical fitness standards in the binding part of the STCW Code. This will help, on the one hand, to ensure that the medical fitness standards established by the Parties under regulation I/9 address key safety concerns relating to seafarers' fitness and, on the other hand, improve consistency between the standards established by different Parties. Establishing a common basis for the issue of medical fitness certificates for seafarers will thus promote the mutual recognition of such certificates between the Parties. Finally, it will also provide a clear, function-based but non-prescriptive reference framework for the Joint IMO/ILO/WHO Working Group when this will develop Guidelines on medical examinations for seafarers.

5 In view of the above, the co-sponsors propose to insert in section A-I/9 a mandatory framework comprising a set of criteria aimed to ensure physical and medical fitness for seafarers, as set out in the annex, under point 2. This proposal is intended to clarify in particular that:

- there are certain physical demands of living and working on board ship which require that all seafarers have a basic level of physical fitness and functional capability; and
- all seafarers must be physically fit enough to perform their role in an emergency on board.

If this proposal is agreed, the co-sponsors would accept that table A-I/9-2 on minimum physical abilities be placed in part B of the Code. Some changes to the drafting of this table are also proposed, in the light of discussions at STW 41, as set out in annex 3.

Minimum eyesight standards

6 Apart from finding an appropriate balance between mandatory and recommendatory standards, the co-sponsors have also reassessed their position as regards the amount of discretion that should be allowed to recognized medical practitioners. In this respect, the co-sponsors maintain the position that there, as a general rule, shall be no discretion given with respect to the minimum eyesight standards for distance vision aided, near/immediate vision and colour vision in table A-I/9-1.

However, the co-sponsors see merit in allowing some discretion on the application of these rules as regards all engineering department personnel. They consider that a person in the engine department who has limited (or no) eyesight for distance vision on one eye does not pose any risk to the safety of a ship, for as long as this person has a combined eyesight for distance vision of at least 0.4. Hence, bearing in mind that the standards as currently stipulated in the draft text of the Convention in table A-I/9-1 are set per eye, the co-sponsors believe that discretion could be given, for this category of seafarers, on the condition that the seafarer's combined vision is at least 0.4.

7 In view of the above, the co-sponsors propose amendments to relevant provisions of section A-I/9, as well as in table A-I/9-1, as set in annex 2.

Grandfather clause

8 Furthermore, the co-sponsors believe that differentiation of medical fitness standards should also be allowed between different roles and functions on board and bearing in mind the different duties of seafarers. Also, where medical fitness standards allow for such differentiation and differentiation between new entrants and serving seafarers (that is currently the case in the draft text of the Convention), the extent of these differentiations must be specified by the Party and not be left to the discretion of the recognized medical practitioners.

9 Therefore, the co-sponsors propose some amendments to section A-I/9, paragraph 1, to accommodate these objectives, as set out in annex 2.

Permission to work without a valid medical certificate

10 As a final point, the co-sponsors consider that it is necessary to provide for the possibility to allow, in urgent cases and under certain conditions, a seafarer to work without a valid medical certificate. This would also reflect the relevant provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

11 Therefore, the co-sponsors propose some amendments to regulation I/9 to accommodate this objective, as set out in annex 1.

Action requested of the Conference

12 The Conference is invited to consider the proposal and decide as appropriate.

ANNEX 1

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER I OF THE STCW CONVENTION AND CODE

Chapter I

Standards regarding general provisions

- Notes:** 1) The reference texts are from document STCW/CONF.2/3.
2) Proposed amendments are shown as underlined and deleted text as ~~striketrough~~.

1 Regulation I/9 – Medical standards

A new paragraph shall be inserted after paragraph 6:

“6bis In urgent cases the Administration may permit a seafarer to work without a valid medical certificate until the next port of call where the seafarer can obtain a medical certificate from a qualified medical practitioner, provided that:

- (a) the period of such permission does not exceed three months; and
- (b) the seafarer concerned is in possession of an expired medical certificate of recent date.”

ANNEX 2

Notes: The reference texts are from document STCW/CONF.2/4.
Proposed amendments are shown as underlined and deleted text as ~~struckthrough~~.

1 Section A-I/9 – Medical standards

.1 Paragraph 1 shall be amended as follows:

“1 Parties, when establishing standards of medical fitness for seafarers as required by regulation I/9, shall adhere to ~~take into account~~ the minimum in-service eyesight standards set out in table A-I/9-1 and the criteria for physical and medical fitness set out in paragraph 1bis. They should also take into account ~~, the minimum physical abilities set out in table [A-I/9-2] and the guidance given in section B-I/9 of this Code and table B-I/9-1 regarding assessment of minimum physical abilities.~~, bearing in mind the different duties of seafarers.”

These standards may to the extent determined by the Party and without prejudice to the safety of the seafarers or the ship, differentiate between those persons seeking to start a career at sea and those seafarers already serving at sea and between different functions on board, bearing in mind the different duties of seafarers. In the former case, for example, it might be appropriate to designate higher standards in certain areas, while for seafarers already serving at sea some reduction may be made. They shall also take into account the need to identify the presence of screen for any impairment or disease that will limit the ability of the seafarer to effectively perform his/her duties during the validity period of the medical certificate.”

.2 A new paragraph shall be inserted after paragraph 1:

“1bis The standards of medical fitness established by the party shall ensure that seafarers satisfy the following criteria:

- .1 have the physical capability to fulfil all the requirements of the basic training;
- .2 demonstrate adequate hearing and speech to communicate effectively and detect any audible alarms;
- .3 have no medical condition, disorder or impairment that will prevent the effective and safe conduct of their routine or emergency duties on board during the validity period of the medical certificate;
- .4 are not suffering from any medical condition likely to be aggravated by service at sea or to render the seafarer unfit for such service or to endanger the health of other persons on board; and
- .5 are not taking any medication that has side effects that will impair judgment, balance, or any other requirements for effective and safe performance of routine or emergency duties on board.”

.3 Paragraph 4 shall be amended as follows:

“4 Each Party shall provide guidance for the conduct of medical fitness examinations and issuing of medical certificates, taking into account provisions set out in section B-I/9 of this Code. Each Party shall determine the amount of discretion given to recognized medical practitioners on the application of the medical standards, bearing in mind the different duties of seafarers, except that there shall not be discretion with respect to the minimum eyesight standards for distance vision aided, near/immediate vision and colour vision in table A-I/9-1 for seafarers in the deck department required to undertake look-out duties. A Party may allow discretion on the application of these standards as regards seafarers in the engine department, on the condition that seafarers' combined vision fulfils the requirements set in table A-I/9-1.

Section A-I/9 – Minimum in-service eyesight standards for seafarers

2 Table A-I/9-1 – Minimum in-service eyesight standards for seafarers shall be amended as follows:

Table A-I/9-1 – Minimum in-service eyesight standards for seafarers

STCW Convention regulation	Category of seafarer	Distance vision Aided ¹		Near/immediate vision	Colour vision ³	Visual fields ⁴	Night blindness ⁴	Diplopia (double vision) ⁴
		One eye	Other eye					
I/11 II/1 II/2 II/3 II/4 II/5 VII/2	Masters, deck officers and ratings required to undertake look-out duties	0.5 ²	0.5	Vision required for ships navigation (e.g., chart and nautical publication reference, use of bridge instrumentation and equipment, and identification of aids to navigation)	See Note 5 6	Normal Visual fields	Vision required to perform all necessary functions in darkness without compromise	No significant condition evident
I/11 III/1 III/2 III/3 III/4 III/5 III/6 III/7 VII/2	All engineer Officers, electro-technical officers, electrotechnical ratings and ratings or others forming part of an engine room watch	0.4 ⁵	0.4 (see Note 5)	Vision required to read instruments in close proximity, to operate equipment, and to identify systems/ components as necessary	See Note 6 7	Sufficient visual fields	Vision required to perform all necessary functions in darkness without compromise	No significant condition evident
I/11 IV/2	GMDSS Radio operators	0.4	0.4	Vision required to read instruments in close proximity, to operate equipment, and to identify systems/ components as necessary	See Note 6 7	Sufficient visual fields	Vision required to perform all necessary functions in darkness without compromise	No significant condition evident

¹ Values given in Snellen decimal notation

² A value of at least 0.7 in one eye is recommended to reduce the risk of undetected underlying eye disease

³ As defined in the *International Recommendation for Colour Vision Requirements for Transport* by the Commission Internationale de l'Eclairage (CIE-143-2001)

⁴ Subject to assessment by a clinical vision specialist where indicated by initial examination findings

⁵ Engine department personnel shall have a combined eyesight vision of at least 0.4

⁶ CIE colour vision standard 1 or 2

⁷ CIE colour vision standard 1, 2 or 3

ANNEX 3

Notes: The reference texts are from document STCW/CONF.2/4.

Proposed amendments are shown as underlined and deleted text as ~~strike through~~.

Section B-I/9 – Guidance regarding medical standards

1 Table A-I/9-2 shall be inserted in section B-I/9 and amended as follows:

Table BA-I/9-12
Assessment of minimum entry level and in-service physical abilities for seafarers³

Shipboard task, function, event or condition ³	Related physical ability	A medical examiner should be satisfied that the seafarer
Routine movement around vessel: - on moving deck - between levels - between compartments	Maintain balance and move with agility Climb up and down vertical ladders and stairways Step over coamings <u>(Load Line Convention requires coamings to be e.g. 600 mm high)</u> Open and close watertight doors	Has no disturbance in sense of balance. Does not have any impairment or disease that prevents relevant movements and physical activities Is, without assistance ⁵ , able to : - climb vertical ladders and stairways - step over high sills - manipulate door closing systems
<i>Note 1 applies to this row</i>		
Routine tasks on board - Use of hand tools - Movement of ship's stores - Overhead work - Valve operation - Standing a four-hour watch - Working in confined spaces - Responding to alarms, warning and instructions - Verbal communications	Strength, dexterity and stamina to manipulate mechanical devices Lift, pull and carry a load (e.g. 18kg); <u>the estimated weight of a standard breathing apparatus is 18 kg)</u> Reach upwards Stand, walk and remain alert for an extended period Work in constricted spaces and move through restricted openings <u>(e.g., SOLAS requires minimum openings in cargo spaces and emergency escapes to have the minimum dimensions of 600 mm x 600 mm – e.g., SOLAS Regulation 3.6.5.1)</u> Visually distinguish objects, shapes and signals Hear warnings and instructions Give a clear spoken description	Does not have a defined impairment or diagnosed medical condition that reduces ability to perform routine duties essential to the safe operation of the vessel. Has ability to - work with arms raised - stand and walk for an extended period - enter confined spaces - fulfil eyesight standards (A-I/9-1) - fulfil hearing standards set by competent authority or take account of - international guidelines - hold normal conversation
<i>Note 1 applies to this row</i>		

Shipboard task, function, event or condition ³	Related physical ability	A medical examiner should be satisfied that the seafarer
Emergency duties on board ⁶ - Escape - Fire-fighting - Evacuation	Don a lifejacket or immersion suit Escape from smoke-filled spaces Take part in fire-fighting duties, including use of breathing apparatus. Take part in vessel evacuation procedures	Does not have a defined impairment or diagnosed medical condition that reduces ability to perform emergency duties essential to the safe operation of the vessel. Has ability to - don lifejacket or immersion suit - crawl - feel for differences in temperature - handle fire-fighting equipment - wear breathing apparatus (where required as part of duties)
<i>Note 2 applies to this row</i>		

Notes:

1. Rows 1 and 2 of the above table describe (a) ordinary shipboard tasks, functions events and conditions, (b) the corresponding physical capabilities which may be considered necessary for the safety of a seafarer, other crew members and the vessel, and (c) high level criteria for use by medical practitioners assessing medical fitness, bearing in mind the different duties of seafarers and the nature of shipboard work for which they will be employed.
2. Row 3 of the above table describes (a) ordinary shipboard tasks, functions, events and conditions, (b) the corresponding physical capability which shall be considered necessary for the safety of a seafarer, other crew members and the vessel (c) high level criteria for use by medical practitioners assessing medical fitness bearing in mind the different duties of seafarers and the nature of shipboard work for which they will be employed.
3. This table is not intended to address all possible shipboard conditions or potentially disqualifying medical conditions. Parties may specify physical abilities applicable to the category of seafarers (such as “deck officer” and “engine rating”). The special circumstances of individual and for those who have specialized or limited duties should receive due consideration.
4. If in doubt, the medical practitioner should quantify the degree of severity of any relevant impairment by means of objective tests, whenever appropriate tests are available, or by referring the candidate for further assessment.
5. The term assistance means the use of another person to accomplish the task.
6. The term emergency duties is used to cover all standard emergency response situations such as abandon ship or fire-fighting, as well as the procedures to be followed by each seafarer to secure personal survival.