



SUB-COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING
34th session
Agenda item 4

STW 34/4/6
18 December 2002
Original: ENGLISH

FOLLOW-UP ACTION TO THE 1995 STCW CONFERENCE

Watchkeeping at anchor

Submitted by Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF), International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSMA) and Society of International Gas Tanker and Terminal Operators (SIGTTO)

SUMMARY

Executive summary: Some inconsistencies are apparent with respect to watchkeeping requirements at anchor within the STCW Code. In particular, the Master is given discretion to have the vessel at anchor in an open roadstead or other virtually at sea condition without a certificated deck officer keeping a navigational watch. This paper highlights Safety and Security concerns from this discretion continuing and invites the Sub-Committee to consider clarification of the issue and possible amendments of the Code to redress this.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 9

Related documents: STW 33/17; STW 33/5/5

1 Groundings and the consequences from collisions, directly attributable to failure to keep a continuous navigational watch by competent deck officers using the navigational aids available on the bridge whilst the ship is at anchor, continue to occur. These include incidents where vessels drag their anchor with no watchkeeper present skilled enough to identify the problem; incidents where a ship underway collides with one at anchor, where nobody on board the anchored ship is aware of the potential problem until the collision occurs - either because no continuous watch is kept or the appointed watchkeeper does not have the skills to identify the developing situation.

2 A further factor to take into account is the need for skilled use of radar and other navigational aids to assist in maintaining the security of the ship when it is anchored, particularly in open areas outside the immediate control of shore monitoring and any associated port security services.

3 Within the amended annex to the 1978 STCW Convention, Regulation VIII/2 paragraph 2.4, requires that "an appropriate and effective watch or watches are maintained for the purpose of safety at all times, while the ship is at anchor or moored.....". This is supplemented by the STCW Code, Section A/VIII/2, part 3-1, paragraph 51, where more detailed duties and

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly asked to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

requirements are laid down - the second sentence noting: "While at anchor, the officer in charge of the navigational watch shall:....", and a series of ten duties is then specified.

4 However, a number of masters and operators use the first sentence in this paragraph 51 - "If the master considers it necessary, a continuous navigational watch shall be maintained at anchor" - as a means whereby masters exercise discretion to discontinue a watch by a certificated officer, allowing the specified duties in paragraph 51 to be ignored, even with the ship in an exposed position such as open roadstead or other virtually "at sea" condition.

5 On a positive note, some of the more prudent ship operators and masters have continued the traditional "best practice" of keeping a certificated deck officer on continuous watch when at anchor or underway. Such instructions being incorporated into Standing Orders and the relevant sections of their ISM Manuals.

6 During discussions at STW 33 there were a number of comments suggesting that it was important for the master to keep this apparent "discretion" over whether a navigational watch is maintained. However, no safety imperative was offered as to how exercising such discretion to discontinue a navigational watch at anchor, can make operations safer than complying with an obligation to have a certificated officer keeping a proper navigational watch at all times. The only feasible reasons to keep such discretion are to facilitate operational or commercial expedience. There is no comparable relaxation in the requirement to keep a continuous navigational watch if a ship is drifting or not making way through the water in open ocean, which has a comparable risk level to a ship at anchor.

7 We believe that this inconsistency should be removed from the Code and the safest practices should be mandated. In addition, measures to maintain security of the ship should be borne in mind, particularly in areas outside controlled port jurisdiction. Proposed amendments to the Code are offered for consideration in the annex to this document.

8 Such amendments will only apply to ships under "Part 3 - Watchkeeping at Sea" and will not affect operations carried out at anchor within port limits, where "Part 4 - Watchkeeping in Port" adequately addresses "any ship safely moored or safely at anchor under normal circumstances in port ...". The Security aspects of the amendments are primarily for the "at sea" situation, whereas Security watchkeeping requirements "in port" may be subject to additional local regulation.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

9 The Sub-Committee is invited to consider the proposed amendments and take action as appropriate.

ANNEX

In the chapeau to paragraph 51 of Section A/VIII/2, part 3-1, delete the words:

"If the master considers it necessary"

Add text, so that the revised chapeau reads:

"To maintain ship security and safety at the highest level, a continuous navigational watch shall be maintained by a certificated deck officer whilst the ship is at anchor. The officer in charge of the navigational watch shall, as a minimum:"

and, in section 51.3, add text, to read:

“.3 ensure that a proper look out is maintained by all available means, to maintain awareness of the traffic situation and monitor potential security hazards;”
