



SUB-COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING
37th session
Agenda item 12

STW 37/12/1
17 November 2005
Original: ENGLISH

REVALIDATION OF GMDSS OPERATOR'S CERTIFICATE

Submitted by India

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document proposes a refresher course for revalidation of STCW Endorsement of GMDSS

Action to be taken: Paragraph 11

Related documents: MSC 75/24, MSC 78/26, STW 33/17 and STW 36/17

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-eighth session (12 to 21 May 2004), noted COMSAR 8's concern on the performance of GMDSS operator's certificate holders on board ships and, in this context, requested the STW Sub-Committee to further consider revalidation matters in line with the existing provisions of the STCW Code (MSC 78/26, paragraph 16.30).

2 STW 36 recalled that Norway (STW 33/5/3) had informed STW 33 (21 to 25 January 2002), that on the basis of information gained from radio surveys, they considered that there was a serious lack of competence in knowledge and operation of GMDSS equipment and advised the Sub-Committee that they were therefore considering mandatory examinations for renewal or endorsement of GMDSS certificates every five years. The Russian Federation (STW 33/5/6) had identified similar problems and noted that practical GMDSS implementation constantly required changes in regulatory documents, both nationally and internationally, including amendments to ITU Radio Regulations, IAMSAR manual, etc. and proposed an amendment to section A-IV/2.4 of the STCW Code to require examination every five years.

3 STW 33 had noted that the proposed amendment duplicated to some extent the requirements of regulation I/11 - Revalidation of certificates, where radio operators holding certificates are required to establish continued professional competence in accordance with section A-I/11 of the STCW Code, which includes the options of passing an approved test or successfully completing an approved course, and Administrations could therefore require a mandatory examination if they so decided.

4 Noting the options available to Administrations under STCW regulation I/11, STW 33 had agreed that an amendment to the STCW Code to make examinations mandatory for renewal or endorsement of GMDSS certificates every five years was unnecessary (STW 33/17, paragraph 5.17). MSC 75 had noted the STW 33 decision (MSC 75, paragraph 9.12).

5 At STW 36, Norway advised the Sub-Committee of the results of an investigation during radio survey, indicating that more than 80% of GMDSS certificate holders lacked the competence in all aspects of radio communications including handling of emergency, urgency and distress situations. Germany and the United Kingdom reported similar experiences.

6 A number of delegations expressed the view that there was no need to revise the existing provisions for revalidation and that any such issue should be addressed during the initial training and could be reinforced by conducting regular drills.

7 The Sub-Committee noted that the majority was of the opinion that the existing regulations were sufficiently effective and that there was no need to change the revalidation requirements within the STCW Convention. Nevertheless the request by COMSAR 8 and the statistical evidence provided by Norway, supported by anecdotal evidence from Germany and the United Kingdom, indicated that there was a problem related to the performance of GMDSS operator's certificate holders. Accordingly, the Sub-Committee invited Members to submit results of data available, and proposals to address this issue including the effectiveness of the methodology of revalidation used by Member States.

8 In this context, the Netherlands reminded the Sub-Committee that GMDSS certificates were issued under the provisions of the Radio regulations and only endorsements were issued under the provisions of the STCW Convention.

9 In light of the foregoing, in the opinion of the Government of India it would not be appropriate for the Organization to propose re-examination of GMDSS certificates under the provisions of the STCW Convention, as these certificates had been issued under the provisions of the Radio regulations, after requisite training followed by theory and practical examination. However, noting the statistical evidence provided by Norway, it would be appropriate to deal with this issue as prescribed in paragraph 10 below.

10 Maritime Administrations have been issuing GMDSS endorsements under the provisions of chapter I Regulation I/2 of the STCW Convention certifying that the holder meets the standards of competence specified in section A-IV/2 of the STCW Code, and the holder has the additional knowledge required by the relevant regulations, it may be appropriate to specify a short refresher course for the revalidation of STCW Endorsement of GMDSS Certificate to cover operational aspects of GMDSS equipment on board ships and new developments, such as Fleet 77, Mini-M, AIS, Long-Range AIS, SSA, VDR, etc.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

11 The Sub-Committee is invited to note the above information and to take action as appropriate.
