



SUB-COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING
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Agenda item 17

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Review of the STCW Code requirements regarding demonstration of competence

Submitted by Norway

SUMMARY

- Executive summary:*** This document explains the need for a review of provisions in chapter VI of the STCW Code regarding demonstration of competence, so as to clarify minimum requirements in particular regarding refresher courses ashore. The document also provides comments on the documents submitted by ISF and the Philippines respectively, on this subject. In general, Norway supports the possible course of action proposed by the Philippines in paragraph 12 of their document.
- Action to be taken:*** Paragraph 15
- Related documents:*** STW 37/17/1, STW 37/17/2, and the STCW Code sections A-VI/1 paragraph 2.2, A-VI/2 paragraph 4 and 8, A-VI/3 paragraph 4 and A-VI/4

Introduction

1 Both the seventy-eighth and the eightieth sessions of MSC considered documents by Norway proposing to conduct a review of requirements regarding demonstration of competence in chapter VI of the STCW Code. The background for proposing such a review was the following. In the view of Norway, some of the requirements of Chapter VI can only be complied with by seafarers attending a refresher course ashore. We are aware, however, that other flag States apply a different interpretation, and do not require such refresher courses ashore. Since this subject relates to safety at sea and also has cost implications, in our view, it would be desirable to establish a “common ground” for interpretation of these provisions.

2 Document STW 37/17/2, submitted by the Philippines to this session, contains (in paragraphs 1 to 4) a brief and fair summary of the discussions in MSC and STW, and is therefore not repeated in our document.

Comments on demonstration of competence

3 As we have stated in earlier submissions, Norway fully accepts that many aspects related to demonstration of competence, as required by Chapter VI of the STCW Code, can be taken care of within the ship itself. These training aspects can partly be achieved by day-to-day “on the job training” and partly by the crew members taking part in periodic on-board training and drills, as required in regulation II-2/15 “Instructions, on-board training and drills”, and regulation III/19 “Emergency training and drills” in the SOLAS ’74 Convention.

4 However, there are – and have to be – limits to *which aspects* of training and also to the *realism* of such training that can be arranged within the ship itself. All on-board training will have to be confined/limited so as never to endanger the safety of crew members and of the ship itself. In line with this basic principle, the training and drills prescribed by the provisions referred to in chapters II-2 and III of SOLAS, do clearly not attempt to cover all aspects specified as the “minimum standard of competence” in personal survival techniques and fire fighting as set out in tables A-VI/1-1 and A-VI/1-2 in Part A of the STCW Code.

5 As an example, we will refer to the requirements of section A-VI/1 regarding “Fight and extinguish fires”. These requirements are listed in the second row of Table A-VI/1-2. Under column 3 “Methods for demonstrating competence” ten separate items are listed including the following:

- .4 extinguish extensive fires with water, using jet and spray nozzles
- .7 fight fire in smoke-filled enclosed spaces wearing self-contained breathing apparatus
- .9 extinguish oil fire with fog applicator and spray nozzles, dry chemical powder or foam applicators.

In the lead-in text to these items, it is required that each item has to be demonstrated “*in spaces which provide truly realistic training conditions*”. In our view, the requirements quoted in this example can not be complied with by training within the ship itself, without creating severe dangers to the ship and its crew. This also applies to *other* items regarding fire fighting.

6 Consequently, in the opinion of Norway the above mentioned requirements as well as other requirements in chapter VI, can *only* be fulfilled by requiring seafarers to attend a refresher course ashore.

Comments on document STW 37/17/1 by ISF

7 The first part of paragraph 4 in ISF’s document reads as follows, “STCW provisions in regulation I/11 and section A-I/11 make it clear that additional refresher training and revalidation are only required for masters, officers and radio operators and that chapter VI is excluded.” Similar viewpoints have earlier been expressed by other parties. Again Norway has to repeat previous arguments. It has to be recognized that regulation I/11 of the STCW Convention and section A-I/11 of the STCW Code regulate revalidation of specific certificates, while STCW chapter VI and STCW Code chapter VI regulate a completely different issue, i.e., requirements on familiarization and basic safety training applicable to all seafarers, as well as training requirements for certain emergency tasks and medical care. In view of the fact that the two sets of regulations referred to regulate two separate subjects, the provisions in regulation I/11 and

section A-1/11 can in no way be interpreted to put any “limitations” (e.g., on refresher training) on what is needed to comply with *other* regulations in the STCW Convention and the STCW Code, including chapter VI.

8 Paragraph 5 in ISF’s document expresses the following view: “ISF is concerned that additional training in chapter VI will place a heavy burden on seafarers and shipowners when there may be no real need for such training.” In our view, the crux of the matter is the following: can all the mandatory provisions of chapter VI of the STCW Code required to be verified every five years be arranged by training only within the ship itself? If the answer is “no”, then those training elements which cannot be covered within the ship itself will have to be arranged at suitable facilities outside the ship. This may be considered “a heavy burden”, but will be justified by safety benefits. Furthermore, such “burdens” should not create severe problems provided they apply equally to all parts of shipping.

9 Paragraph 7 in ISF’s document reads as follows: “Where there is an issue with training levels, the ISM Code (namely regulation 6.5) is in place to ensure that all crew members are adequately trained. ISF believes this is a much better way to maintain competence standards.” Norway fully agrees that each ship should have a safety management system which ensures that all relevant types of training needed for each crew member are identified and provided. This will, of course, also have to include relevant training arrangements needed to comply with section A-VI of the STCW Code. Therefore, we do not understand the last sentence quoted. Any training aspects not possible to arrange within the ship itself, will have to be arranged elsewhere at suitable facilities, irrespective of all training aspects being incorporated within the ships’ safety management system or not.

Comments on document STW 37/17/2 by the Philippines

10 As a general comment, Norway can agree with most of the viewpoints and recommendations contained in the document submitted by the Philippines. We will provide additional comments in the following.

11 Paragraph 5 in the document by the Philippines reads as follows: “The Philippines would consider the need for a review of the STCW Code chapter VI, but objects to any amendment to part A of the STCW Code. Whatever findings and conclusions are resolved in STW 37, appropriate measures should be reflected in part B of the STCW Code as guidance to Administrations.” Norway has earlier argued that it seems desirable to amend part A of the STCW Code. However, we can also go along with the proposal by the Philippines to develop clear guidance in Part B of the STCW Code on the subject under discussion, and then not amend Part A.

12 In paragraphs 6 to 11, the Philippines discusses various aspects related to the *possible* need for retraining courses. We can fully agree that such courses should be limited as much as possible to avoid unnecessary burdens and costs. Our viewpoints are further explained in paragraphs 3 to 6 above.

13 In paragraph 12 of the document by the Philippines, a possible course of action is indicated, starting by identifying “the particular items under Columns 3 of the tables in chapter VI of the STCW Code which may necessitate the attendance to a short refresher course ...”. Norway can fully support this proposed course of action. We also agree that it may be desirable to develop guidance under the various sections in Part B, Chapter VI of the STCW Code, and possibly also under section B-I/14, in line with the proposals given in paragraphs 12b and 12a in the document by the Philippines.

Conclusions and recommendations

14 As indicated in paragraph 13 above, Norway supports the course of action indicated in paragraph 12 in document STW 37/17/2 by the Philippines.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

15 STW is invited to consider the viewpoints and proposals presented in this document, and take action as appropriate.
