

Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes for Thursday, April 1, 1999
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters
Washington, DC

OPENING REMARKS

Bill Eglinton, Chairman of the Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (MERPAC), opened the meeting at 8:05 a.m. and made opening remarks. He then introduced MERPAC's sponsor, Rear Admiral (RADM) North.

RADM North thanked MERPAC members and members of the public for attending. He remarked that the agenda (enclosure (1)) included many topics that are of high interest to the Office of Marine Safety and Environmental Protection (G-M).

RADM North noted that the amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978 (STCW) are of particular interest to him. It is important to develop a national standard for mariner competence so that all facets of industry involved will know and understand the minimum requirements. He introduced Captain (CAPT) Robert Skewes, who is the Coast Guard's lead in working with industry on the implementation and coordination team. The goal of these programs is to establish guidelines so that the mariner or ship operator can easily find out the information that they need to operate within the convention. This effort depends heavily on the work of the expert members of the work groups that have been formed.

With regard to the working group on Medical Standards for Seafarers, RADM North noted that the advice from this group would be very helpful at the upcoming International Maritime Organization (IMO) meeting.

RADM North welcomed MERPAC's newest committee member, Lou Edmondson of American Commercial Barge Lines. He thanked the MERPAC members who have agreed to extend their terms in order to maintain MERPAC in an operational status.

The interim final rule concerning STCW certification was published June 26, 1997. It requires mariners to establish competence by demonstrating their knowledge and proficiency in a number of subject matter areas. The Coast Guard is establishing work groups to establish performance standards for each of these subjects. On February 12, 1999, a notice appeared in the Federal Register seeking volunteers to serve on these work groups and over 100 people have responded to date. The goal of these work groups will be to establish a national standard of minimum competence that can be easily understood.

On February 11, 1999, RADM North met with the chairpersons of the seven Federal Advisory Committees that he sponsors. They discussed common goals, best practices, and G-M goals. The G-M performance plan is currently being revised and will be provided to all Federal Advisory Committee members. RADM North invites all of the advisory committees to share their information and concerns concerning the plan with the Coast Guard.

In regard to the Prevention Through People (PTP) program, RADM North encouraged everyone to visit the PTP homepage, and to check the Federal Advisory Committees homepage as well. Both pages can be accessed through the Coast Guard's Internet site, <http://www.uscg.mil>. These web pages provide good information and are an excellent communication tool between the Coast Guard and industry.

RADM North explained that a Marine Transportation System Initiative has been established by the Department of Transportation (DOT), Coast Guard, the Marine Administration (MARAD), and other agencies to ensure that as the levels of marine traffic increase in the future, U.S. waterways will be able to provide a safe, environmentally sound, efficient, and secure means of transportation. Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater held a conference in November, attended by around 144 stakeholders, to attempt to coordinate this process. The proceedings of this conference were published in the Federal Register, and a task force report is due in Congress this July. The subcommittee of Federal Advisory Committee representatives put together by RADM North will meet again, possibly in late spring, and will provide advice in this process.

Secretary Slater has signed the 1997 MERPAC membership slate. The Coast Guard review of the 1998 and 1999 membership slates is almost completed. RADM North noted that one of the main concerns voiced by the Committee Chairpersons was that the process of getting slates approved is getting slower. The Commandant and the Secretary are working to streamline and quicken the process.

RADM North noted the full agenda and suggested moving ahead. At this time, he swore in new member Lou Edmondson.

Mr. Eglinton thanked RADM North and introduced Commander (CDR) Steve Boyle, Executive Director of MERPAC. CDR Boyle welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Bill Eglinton and Captain Roy Murphy, the new Chairman and Vice-Chairman of MERPAC. He then introduced Jerry Miente, formerly of the National Maritime Center, who is the new marine engineer on the G-MSO-1 staff. CDR Boyle asked everyone to look at the master list of updated MERPAC recommendations and let him know if there are any changes or errors.

CDR Boyle announced that notification of the meeting appeared in the Federal Register on March 1, 1999. He reminded everyone to sign the sign-in sheets (enclosure (2)). Before turning the meeting back over to Mr. Eglinton, he thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their efforts in maritime safety.

Mr. Eglinton thanked Mark Gould for his work on preparations for the meeting, and also thanked Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) George Burns for working on the Federal Register notice for volunteers and for keeping him updated concerning the volunteers. He said that in a meeting held the previous day, Working Group B (National Maritime Center Licensing Reengineering Team) and Working Group C (Assessment of Proficiencies as Mandated by Amended 1995 STCW Convention) had been closed because their work had been completed.

Mr. Eglinton said that several new task statements had been accepted at the meeting the day before. New working groups were formed on Task Statement 19, Performance Measures for Evaluating Mariner Competence, Task Statement 17, Medical Standards for Seafarers (enclosure (3)), and Task Statement 18, Evidence of Five-Year Recency in the four elements of basic safety training (enclosure (4)). All of the working groups met yesterday. Joe Murphy is the chairman for Task Statement 18 and Beth Gedney is the chairwoman for Task Statement 17.

Mr. Eglinton, on behalf of MERPAC, applauded RADM North's effort in the formation of the STCW Working Groups. He shared his personal belief that the U.S. is struggling to maintain a viable fleet, but that it has some of the best seafarers in the world. The U.S. will set the standard internationally for seafarer training. By February 1, 2002 only the best training schools will remain. He applauded the fact that over 100 experts have volunteered for STCW work groups, and noted that the men and women manning the U.S. fleet are depending on the work of these groups.

Mr. Eglinton called for a vote on the minutes from the previous MERPAC meeting. The previous meeting's minutes were adopted unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Eglinton asked LCDR Burns to comment on the Federal Register notice on the Basic Safety Training Assessment Package.

LCDR Burns reported that only four comments were received on the Federal Register notice, but the comments were positive and constructive. He said that there is not much left to be done, and members of the Basic Safety Training Work Group should volunteer for work on other groups.

Mr. Eglinton noted for the record that the committee had voted to close Working Group B at their meeting the day before because there was nothing left to be done on that task statement. He also noted that Working Group C had met and developed expanded assessment criteria for designated examiners and training facilities. He suggested that the rest of the STCW work should be patterned on the results of this working group.

Mr. Eglinton then asked Ellen Warner to report on the PTP Working Group.

Ms. Warner said that the PTP Working group had no new work, except for the meetings on near-miss reporting attended by Andrew McGovern, and she asked him to report further.

Mr. McGovern reported that work in near-miss reporting and the National Incident Response System (NIRS) seems to be going well. Legislation has been developed to help protect the reporting-party from liability. A form will be created that should be able to handle all types of incidents. They are also working to design and structure the computer system. He remarked that the potential legislation will probably take one or two years to get through Congress. A marketing plan is being developed to inform mariners about NIRS and to encourage its use. However, he warned that, like any new system, NIRS will take as long as five years to get to a level where it is effective.

RADM North commented on the near-miss reporting system. He said that the Coast Guard is working hard on the legislation to protect the reporting entity from liability and is putting together funding in 2000 and 2001 for this effort. At the recent Port Risk Symposium, there was much discussion on the near-miss reporting and the effort to implement a system is gathering momentum. He appreciates the work done and reminded everyone to bring this issue to the attention in any forums that they might attend.

RADM North asked if Working Group C was being absorbed by Working Group A, and Mr. Eglinton replied in the affirmative.

RADM North noted that at the last meeting there was much discussion on Working Group B, the National Maritime Center. He asked if MERPAC is satisfied that its view has been understood. Mr. Eglinton replied that after discussions yesterday and comments made by CAPT Bennett, MERPAC decided to close this working group. RADM North replied that he wanted to ensure that the ideas from MERPAC are up to date. He suggested that the working group be considered inactive and not closed. Mr. Eglinton agreed and then asked for any new business.

NEW BUSINESS

Captain Charles Pillsbury of MITAGS updated the committee on the work of the International

Marine Safety System (IMUS) steering committee. He indicated that they are no longer considering any association with the International Safety Management (ISM) Code or National Maritime Safety Incident Reporting System (NSMIR). Connecting the ISM Code and the IMUS code presents legal problems, because the ISM Code does not have any protection from liability.

Mr. Eglinton then asked LCDR Burns to give an update on the formation of work groups for the National Performance Measures for Evaluating Mariner Competence.

LCDR Burns said that RADM North gave a good description of the background of the performance measures for evaluating mariner competence work groups. MERPAC has accepted Task Statement 19 to establish work groups for each competency. He matched the expertise of the volunteers with the list of work groups. He said that the work group memberships are still open and asked for more volunteers. He indicated that all of the groups will have to coordinate with each other, because STCW utilizes a building block approach to competencies. The groups need to be consistent and support each other in their requirements.

Mr. Eglinton then gave a report on Working Group A, dealing with STCW and task statement 19, national performance measures for evaluating mariner competence. He said that the 19 groups organized to address the 19 competencies had been compressed into 14 groups: The GMDSS work groups were combined; the RO/RO Training was added to the Tanker Training Master, Officers, Ratings Work Group; the Designated Duty Engineer (DDE) and Officer in Charge of Engineering Watch groups were combined, and; the Basic Safety Training Group work is completed. (See Table 1 below.) Each work group will be chaired by a MERPAC member, and the groups will depend heavily on volunteer expertise. Mr. Eglinton indicated that persons who were members of the Basic Safety Training Group should join other work groups. As far as was practicable, volunteers were placed in the working groups they requested.

Table 1. Work Group Changes

Work Group
Action
GMDSS Radio Maintainer and Restricted Operator
GMDSS Radio Operator
Combined
Tanker Training Master, Officers, Ratings
RO/RO Training Master, Officers, Ratings
Combined
Designated Duty Engineer, Periodically Manned Engine Room
Officer In Charge Engineering Watch, Manned Engine Room
Combined
Basic Safety Training
Completed

Mr. Eglinton added that it is critical that everyone involved in this effort understands what the end product needs to be. He stated that the meeting will break into work groups shortly and the goal of the work group meetings was to ensure that each work group understands the process. To do this, they should review the format used by the Basic Safety Training Group. He then turned the meeting over to John Bobb from the NMC to review the product of the Basic Safety

Training Work Group.

Mr. Bobb showed slides of the documentation the working group had developed. They developed a page of general information to go with the competency tables to provide guidance for assessment, instruction on using the tables, requirements for the person doing the assessment, and conditions for the assessment. STCW requires written assessment or practical demonstration of each competency. Each person needs to be assessed with the same criteria because without the criteria, an examiner would be able to use subjective judgement. The columns on the table list the STCW competency being assessed, the performance objectives, the performance measures (observable behaviors), and the performance standard (list of things that need to be done to pass). The experts in each work group will determine the level of detail in the tables. Some things are inherent in the competency being tested, but if they need to be checked, they should be listed on the table.

Mr. Eglinton said that he has been asked if MERPAC is spreading itself too thin in the work groups. He said that they have over 100 volunteers to help them out, and that they have prioritized the working groups. Some of the work groups need to complete their work as soon as possible. He will be checking in weekly with the chairperson of each group, and as time goes on, he may need to step in or shift assets. He reminded everyone that there are many people available to answer questions or request help from, including the people on the list of MERPAC members and key Coast Guard personnel. The job of the MERPAC members as chairpersons is to coordinate the work of the expert volunteers. There is considerable information available to the work groups on these subjects, including information from training schools. In addition, many training facilities have offered to help with the work being done.

Mr. Eglinton then explained that when the work groups meet they should discuss the process they will be using. Several of the tasks, he added, will not take long to complete. Any finished products should be forwarded to him, and he will discuss them with CAPT Skewes and CDR Boyle, and then there will be a conference call of the full committee to take the vote. He asked if there were any questions.

Captain Richard Stewart asked if the guidelines attached to task 19 could be sent to the MERPAC members by email, and Mr. Eglinton replied that this was a good suggestion.

RADM North commented that he wants this to be a stakeholder effort, to reflect reality and practicality. The work groups need to establish a reasonable level of competence and the stakeholders will add real-world experience to their recommendations. The work groups should try to create a good national standard so that everyone can understand it.

Mr. Eglinton then asked Beth Gedney to report on Working Group D.

Ms. Gedney reported that Working Group D, Medical Standards for Seafarers, had met and completed their work. She will be presenting recommendations for MERPAC approval during the Working Group Progress Reports held in the afternoon.

Mr. Eglinton asked for a report from Mr. Joe Murphy on Working Group E.

Mr. Murphy said that Working Group E, Evidence of Five-Year Recency in the Four Elements of Basic Safety Training, had also met and completed its work. Recommendations will be presented for approval during the Working Group Progress Reports held in the afternoon.

Mr. Eglinton suggested that the meeting be broken into work groups. All present should go with their work group chairperson and begin discussing their tasks. Their work should be patterned on

the work done by the Basic Safety Training group shown by Mr. Bobb.

Since there were many volunteer members of all work groups absent, Chris Krusa of MARAD suggested combining the work groups today by level, to make sure there were sufficient people for each group.

Mr. McGovern suggested that they combine the groups by building blocks.

After a short recess, Mr. Eglinton asked CDR Boyle to explain the four combination working groups that would be meeting for today only. The rationale behind the combinations was the building block idea, which should be part of the discussion. The key agenda item for the work groups this morning is for the groups to understand how the work will proceed and be laid out. These temporary work groups were put together only for this meeting, and are not intended to remain combined in this way after today's meeting.

Mr. Krusa suggested that the expertise of the Basic Safety Training Group should be spread out among the working groups.

Mr. Eglinton said they should discuss the competencies, including which are knowledge based, and how to intermingle the building blocks.

The meeting was then recessed until 1:30 p.m., and the work groups dispersed to their meeting rooms.

WORKING GROUP PROGRESS REPORTS

The meeting was reconvened at 1:35 p.m. Mr. Eglinton called upon the chairpersons of Working Groups D and E to give their reports.

Ms. Gedney gave the report on Group D. The group developed four recommendations for amendments to the medical standards: "MERPAC recommends that the "Medical Standards for Seafarers" be amended as follows:

1. These guidelines apply to any mariner assigned duties on the muster list (station bill).
2. The shipboard task "making rounds..." be corrected to read "able to stand a watch for a period of not less than four (4) hours" and the corresponding measurement corrected to read "continuously walk for twenty (20) minutes."
3. These standards need to be "completed by a designated examiner at an approved site."
4. MERPAC recommends that U.S. Coast Guard ascertain that all weights and measures conform to ANSI standards, or other industrial standards."

There was a motion and a second to accept the recommendations as they were presented. The committee voted, and the recommendations were unanimously approved.

Mr. McGovern asked if the designated examiner could be a licensed physician. Ms. Gedney replied that the examiner could be a licensed physician, but did not have to be.

Mr. Eglinton asked if this was an issue in the working group. Ms. Gedney replied that it was, and that they decided the assessment could be done by a physician, but did not have to be.

Mr. Joe Murphy then reported on Working Group E, which was working on Evidence of Five-Year Recency in the Four Elements of Basic Safety Training. Mr. Murphy explained that the working group was directed to answer two questions. First, if the requirement to be interpreted was on a rolling five-year clock or can the requirement be interpreted as allowing training and assessment in the four elements to be accumulated over a reasonable period of time and be considered valid

for a full five year period. Second, can a document which attests to the holder's compliance with section A-VI/a paragraph 2 of the STCW Code be accepted as sufficient "evidence" of having achieved the standard of competence for a full five years from the date of the last assessment of one of the elements. The working group was given a draft, which they proposed accepting without amendment:

"MERPAC recommends that this draft text be inserted as new paragraphs 8 to 10 in section B-VI/1 of the STCW Code.

"Evidence of Basic Training

Paragraph 8: Documented training or assessment relating to any one of the four elements of basic training is considered to remain valid for five years from the date of the most recent assessment, provided the assessments in all four elements have taken place within a 12 month period. In other words, the five year cycle for demonstrations of competence under paragraph 2 of section A-VI/1 of the STCW Code can be measured from the date of the final assessment associated with the four elements of basic training when the assessment activities for all four elements have occurred within one year.

Paragraph 9: A suitably worded document, confirming that the condition described above in paragraph 8 has been met, may be accepted as "evidence" that the holder has achieved the standard of competence for the four areas of basic training for purposes of meeting the requirement of paragraph 2.2 of section A-VI/1 of the STCW Code; and this form of evidence may be accepted as valid for a period of five years from the date of issuance of the document.

Paragraph 10: In accordance with regulation I/8, Parties should have a process for monitoring implementation of this provision to ensure that the underlying objectives of section A-VI/1 are achieved."

Ms. Gedney asked if this meant that if an individual did not complete the four elements in twelve months then that person would have two or more expiration dates.

CAPT Bennett replied that they are looking at a twelve-month window for all four parts of the training. People might have to repeat one or more parts of their training.

Captain Pillsbury said the working group had not discussed that option.

CAPT Bennett said that the goal is to have one date. He said that if the training is not completed within the 12 months, then a mariner would have separate dates, and the five-year period ends at the earlier expiration date.

Mr. Sembler said that if an individual wants only one expiration date, then they should re-do the training that does not fall within the 12 month period.

The floor was opened for discussion.

CAPT Bennett said that it is the mariner's choice to have one or more expiration dates. They can have a separate expiration date for each element of the training.

Ms. Gedney replied that she just wanted to be sure that they were not required to repeat the training.

Mr. Eglinton asked Mr. Murphy if anything had changed in the working group's recommendation.

Mr. Murphy said no, but that the one expiration date is in the mariner's best interest.

There was a motion and a second to accept the working group's recommendations. The recommendations were voted on and approved unanimously.

Mr. Eglinton asked for a progress report from each of the four groups that had met earlier in the day.

Katy Haven reported on the engineering ratings group, which included the groups on Officer in Charge of the Engineering Watch, Unlicensed Mariners, and Chief/2nd Engineer. She said that they tried to determine the approach, methods of communication, and resources that would be utilized in the work group's efforts. There are groups at Maine Maritime Academy and SIU that have already done some work in this area. She said that the members of these working groups will be asked to share information and planned strategies.

Bill Sembler reported on the navigation group, including both Officer in Charge of Navigation Watch Groups, Bridge Management, and Master/Chief Mate. The group decided that the Officer in Charge Navigation Watch work groups for vessels both under and over 500 tons should work together because there is significant overlap in their requirements. They are going to use copies of the draft assessment criteria from the Maine Maritime Academy as a starting point. Mr. McGovern read the parts of STCW that are applicable to this work. He said that they discussed the Maine Maritime simulated bridge

training that has been accepted by the Coast Guard as equivalent to 30 days' sea time. Mr. Sembler also said that the groups would work together to avoid duplication.

Mr. Grassia, who worked with Mr. Sembler's group, said that the first phase of this work would be educational in nature.

Captain Roy Murphy reported on the working group that combined Advanced Firefighting, Medical Care and First Aid Training, and Survival and Rescue Boat Training. The group discussed organization and defining objectives as well as how to disseminate information to group members. They also discussed obtaining proficiency information. In addition, Captain Murphy said that they spent time educating themselves on STCW to determine the scope of their work group's task. They also developed a timeline, and plan to complete a draft for the medical and firefighting working groups in June.

Mr. Daschbach reported on the GMDSS, Offshore Supply Industry, and Tanker and Ro-Ro Training for master, officers, and ratings groups. He said that their work group focused on getting the appropriate input from the offshore industry.

Mr. Eglinton then discussed where the work group efforts would go from here. They should reach out first to the work group volunteers who were not present at the meeting, and mail them information. He said that he would follow up with reminders. Next, work group chairpersons should start locating resources based on their "plan of attack." Mr. Eglinton said that he is asking the chairperson of each work group to have a draft package including work to date to him by July 1, 1999. He added that if work can be finished sooner, they should not wait until the next meeting to get the recommendations reviewed and approved. He reminded everyone, at the request of CDR Boyle, that the Coast Guard web sites are an excellent source of information and that the Coast Guard people on the contact list are willing to take calls about the work groups.

Mr. Eglinton stated for the record that MERPAC had approved the recommendations from Working Groups D and E and asked members if there was any interest in closing these work

groups. Members voted unanimously to close the working groups.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Steven J. Boyle, CDR, U.S Coast Guard
Executive Director, MERPAC
Bill Eglinton
Chairman, MERPAC

Date

Date

Encl: (1) Meeting Agenda
(2) List of Attendees
(3) Task Statement 17, Medical Standards for Seafarers
(4) Task Statement 18, Evidence of Five-Year Recency in the Four Elements of Basic Safety Training.

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