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NMC Policy Letter 05-01
6 MAR, 2001

From: Commanding Officer, U. S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center
To: Distribution

Subj: LIFEBOATMAN AND PROFICIENCY IN SURVIVAL CRAFT (PSC)
QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE ON VESSELS NOT EQUIPPED WITH
LIFEBOATS

1. Certification under the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW), requires that deck and engine officers and mariners requiring lifeboatman qualification (including able seamen) be qualified to launch, take command of, and handle a lifeboat. Many smaller vessels are not equipped with lifeboats, and it is not reasonable to require lifeboat qualifications for mariners on these vessels. Those mariners, however, must be qualified to launch, take command of, and handle all other types of survival craft, and this policy letter provides guidance on the qualification for lifeboatman and PSC required of such mariners. It applies to mariners who began their service or training before 1 August 1998 and who apply for a license or endorsement and an accompanying STCW certification before 1 February 2002.

2. **Deck Officers:** A deck officer licensed for oceans service or for near coastal service on vessels of more than 200 gross register tons (GRT), must qualify as an able seaman as a prerequisite for the license. The following clarifies the application of these requirements to deck officers:

a. A licensed deck officer certificated as able seaman-unlimited, able seaman-limited, or able seaman-special meets the requirements for lifeboatman and PSC without any further training or assessment. The STCW-95 endorsement to their U.S. license will not be limited by their PSC qualification.

b. Many deck officers licensed for service on vessels less than 1,600 GRT met the able-seaman certification requirement by qualifying as able seaman-special (OSV). While individuals qualified as able seaman-special (OSV) were heretofore authorized to serve as the sole person in charge of survival craft on OSVs equipped with inflatable liferafts and a rescue boat, they previously had not been required to be adequately assessed in the competencies for such lifeboatman duties. Likewise, deck officers who obtained their licenses on the basis of an able seaman-special (OSV) certification were also authorized to serve as a lifeboatman on vessels equipped with liferafts and rescue boats without necessarily having demonstrated a lifeboatman's competence. Notwithstanding participation in vessel emergency drills, an individual relying on qualification as able seaman-special (OSV) is not considered qualified for an STCW certification for PSC on the basis of his or her U.S. license or MMD alone. Therefore, such a deck officer must as a minimum complete the gap-closing requirements identified for able seaman-special

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(OSV) set forth in paragraph 4. Those deck officers who elect this option and who complete all other gap closing requirements will be issued an STCW-95 certificate endorsed "Limited to service on vessels not equipped with lifeboats." Their merchant mariner's document will also be limited to service on vessels not equipped with lifeboats. To remove the limitations, the officer must complete the training and assessments necessary to prove competence to launch, handle, and command a lifeboat.

3. Engineering Officers: Licensed engineering officers have not previously been required to qualify as lifeboatman/proficiency in survival craft as a prerequisite for licensing. A licensed engineering officer serving on a seagoing vessel with a propulsion system of 1,000 horsepower or more is required to demonstrate competence in PSC as a gap-closing requirement to qualify for an STCW-95 certification. The options for these engineering officers are:

a. Those who elect to fully meet the requirements for qualification as a lifeboatman will also comply with the STCW's requirements for PSC certification. When all other gap-closing requirements have been met, an engineer who elects this option may be issued an STCW-95 endorsement without any survival craft service restriction.

b. Some engineering officers may be employed in industry segments where the vessels are not equipped with lifeboats and have no need of the competency to launch, handle, and command a lifeboat. These engineering officers may complete PSC requirements similar to those prescribed for an able seaman-special (OSV) in paragraph 4. These consist of completion of an approved or accepted course in personal survival techniques, an element included within BST, and successfully passing the U. S. Coast Guard test module on proficiency in survival craft. An STCW-95 endorsement issued to an engineering officer electing this option will be endorsed "Limited to service on vessels that are not equipped with lifeboats." Their merchant mariner's document will also be limited. To remove the limitations, the officer must complete the training and assessments necessary to prove competence to launch, handle, and command a lifeboat.

4. Able Seaman – Special (OSV), Able Seaman – Sail, Able Seaman – Fishing Industry Vessel: A mariner holding an endorsement as able seaman-special (OSV) must:

- a. Complete an approved or accepted course in personal survival techniques, one of the elements included in Basic Safety Training (BST); and
- b. Complete a U. S. Coast Guard examination module to determine his/her knowledge of the procedures for launching, operating, and taking command of inflatable liferafts and rescue boats.

Upon completion of these requirements and the remaining three elements of BST, the mariner will be issued an STCW-95 certificate endorsed with the limitation "Limited to service on vessels not equipped with lifeboats." Their merchant mariner's document will also be limited. To remove the limitations, the individual must complete the additional training and assessments necessary to prove competence to launch, handle, and command a lifeboat.

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DONALD J. KERLIN
Acting

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