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NMC Policy Letter 02-03
22 January 2003

From: Commanding Officer, USCG National Maritime Center
To: Distribution

Subj: PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR MARINERS' CREDENTIALS FOR SERVICE
ON SEAGOING VESSELS BEGINNING 1 FEBRUARY 2003

- Ref:
- (a) Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations, Subchapter B
 - (b) International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW)
 - (c) Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular 1-99, *Refresher Courses for Continued Professional Competence for License Renewals*
 - (d) NMC Policy Letter 8-01, *In-Service Qualifications as a Lifeboatman and Certification as proficient in Survival Craft and Rescue Boats*
 - (e) NMC Policy Letter 14-02, *Qualification for Deck or Engineering Ratings*

1. PURPOSE.

- a. This policy letter provides guidance to the Regional Examination Centers about the processing of applications for mariners' credentials that include STCW certification. It becomes effective on 1 February 2003. Beginning that date, mariners in positions subject to the STCW on all seagoing vessels, except those exempt by references (a) or (b), must hold the appropriate U. S. license and/or rating as well as the accompanying STCW certificate.
- b. The guidance in this document may assist industry and individual mariners to meet the requirements of references (a) and (b). This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is not intended to, nor does it impose, legally-binding requirements on any party. Applicants for the credentials addressed in this policy letter may propose alternatives to qualify for these credentials. Such alternatives should be forwarded to the U. S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center for evaluation against the standards of references (a) and (b).

2. ACTION.

- a. Commanding officers of units with a Regional Examination Center (REC) should be guided by the information in this policy letter.
- b. Commanding officers of units with marine safety responsibilities should bring this policy letter to the attention of the maritime industry and to institutions within their area of responsibility that offer U. S. Coast Guard approved training.

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- c. This policy letter will be distributed by electronic means only. It is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.uscg.mil/STCW/m-policy.htm>.

3. BACKGROUND.

- a. Reference (b) became fully effective on 1 February 2002. Shortly before the effective date, the international community through the International Maritime Organization (IMO) recommended that port states delay full enforcement of the STCW until 1 August 2002. This delay was necessary because numerous parties signatory to the STCW had been unable to establish fully the procedures and/or agreements necessary to issue the required certificates.
- b. The United States agreed to delay enforcement as recommended by the IMO for mariners serving on U. S.-flag vessels in foreign trade. For mariners serving on U. S.-flag vessels in near coastal, domestic trades, the requirement for full compliance with reference (b) was extended until 1 February 2003. This additional extension was necessary to allow Regional Examination Centers (RECs) time to process a backlog of applications for STCW credentials and to allow training facilities time to have presented a sufficient number of courses to meet the training demands.

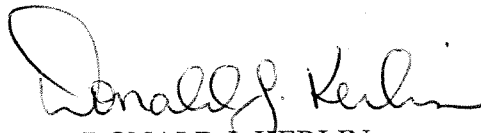
4. DISCUSSION. Beginning 1 February 2003, some of the standards for issuance of mariners' credentials that require an accompanying STCW certificate will change. RECs will be faced with situations involving renewals, upgrades, original issuance, and applications for STCW certificates to accompany existing U. S. credentials. Effective 1 February 2003, applications for these transactions should be processed as follows:

- a. Applications for renewal of mariners' credentials should be processed as described in enclosure (1). The guidance covers receipt of an application prior to 1 February 2003, but issuance of the credentials will occur on or after that date as well as those situations where the application is received on or after 1 February 2003.
- b. Applicants for an upgrade of an existing credential or issuance of an original license or MMD should follow the guidance in the National Maritime Center's policy letter that applies to the particular credential. These policy letters may be found at <http://www.uscg.mil/STCW/m-policy.htm>.
- c. Beginning 1 February 2003, licensed applicants who have never held an STCW-95 certificate and who apply for an original STCW-95 certificate must meet the relevant requirements of 46 CFR 10.205(l), (m), (n), and (o) as well as the appropriate regulations of the STCW and the standards of competence in part A of the STCW Code as required by 46 CFR 10.903(c). An applicant who holds a valid license may satisfy these requirements by successfully completing an approved refresher course for continued professional competence as described in reference (c). A valid license is one that has not expired or

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was not issued for "continuity only." An applicant whose license has expired or was issued for continuity must reinstate the full operating authority of the license before meeting the requirements for issuance of an STCW certificate. As an alternative to completion of a refresher course, applicants may propose to the NMC completion of equivalent training and assessments to demonstrate that the applicant is fully qualified for the STCW certificate.

- d. Beginning 1 February 2003, an applicant holding a valid MMD endorsed with a qualified rating to which the STCW applies who has never held an STCW-95 certificate may apply for an original STCW-95 certificate. To qualify for the certificate, the applicant must complete the four elements of basic safety training and demonstrate his or her competency by completion of the relevant practical demonstrations of skill. A valid MMD is one that has not expired or was not issued for "continuity only." An applicant whose MMD has expired or was issued for continuity must reinstate the full operating authority of the MMD before meeting the requirements for issuance of an STCW certificate. To reinstate full operating authority, the applicant must complete the four elements of basic safety training and demonstrate competency by successfully completing the pertinent assessments listed in reference (d) and/or (e).



DONALD J. KERLIN
Acting Commanding Officer

Encl: (1) Decision table for processing applications for renewal

Copy: Commandant (G-MSO); Area Commanders (Am); All District Commanders (m); All OCMIs
All Activity Commanders; All RECs

DECISION TABLE FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR RENEWAL

IF A MARINER WHO DOES NOT HOLD AN STCW CERTIFICATE APPLIES	AND	THEN
Before 2/1/03 for renewal of a license and/or merchant mariner's document (MMD)	Meets requirements for renewal of the license/MMD and the gap-closing requirements for an STCW certificate Meets the requirements for renewal of the license and/or MMD but does not meet the gap-closing requirements for an STCW certificate.	Process the application and issue the credential even if issuance occurs after 2/1/03. Renew a license but include the STCW endorsement limiting service to vessels in near coastal, domestic trade of less than 200 GRT and/or issue the MMD but do not issue an STCW certificate.
Before 2/1/03 for reinstatement of full operating authority for a license and/or MMD that have/have been renewed for continuity only	Meets all requirements for reinstatement of full operating authority and the gap-closing requirements for the STCW Meets all requirements for reinstatement of the full operating authority, but does not meet the gap-closing requirements	Process the application and reinstate the credentials even if it occurs after 2/1/03. Reinstate a license but include the STCW endorsement limiting service to vessels in near coastal, domestic trade of less than 200 GRT and/or issue the MMD, but do not issue an STCW certificate.
On or after 2/1/03 for renewal of a license	Does not meet the requirements for reinstatement of full operating authority. Meets the requirements for renewal of the license and has completed only the gap-closing requirements, but not the other standards for issuance of an STCW certificate. Does not meet the requirements for renewal of the license	Issue the credential(s) endorsed for continuity only. Renew the license but include the endorsement limiting service to vessels in near coastal, domestic trade of less than 200 GRT, but do not issue an STCW certificate. See paragraph 4.c concerning the STCW certificate. Issue the license endorsed for continuity only.

IF A MARINER WHO DOES NOT HOLD AN STCW CERTIFICATE APPLIES	AND	THEN
On or after 2/1/03 for reinstatement of full operating authority for a license that has been renewed for continuity only	Meets all requirements for reinstatement of full operating authority and meets the standards for issuance of an STCW certificate.	Reinstate the license and issue the STCW certificate.
On or after 2/1/03 for renewal of an MMD	Meets all requirements for reinstatement of the full operating authority, but does not meet the standards for issuance of an STCW certificate.	Reinstate the license but include the STCW endorsement limiting service to vessels in near coastal, domestic trade of less than 200 GRT, but do not issue an STCW certificate. See paragraph 4.c concerning the STCW certificate.
	Does not meet the requirements for reinstatement of full operating authority.	Issue the license endorsed for continuity only.
	Meets the requirements for renewal of the MMD and has completed only basic safety training (no assessments are required)	Renew the MMD, but do not issue an STCW certificate. See paragraph 4.d concerning the STCW certificate.
	Does not meet the requirements for renewal of the MMD	Issue the MMD endorsed for continuity only.
On or after 2/1/03 for reinstatement of full operating authority of an MMD that has been renewed for continuity only	Meets all requirements for reinstatement of full operating authority and meets the standards for issuance of an STCW certificate in accordance with paragraph 4.d	Reinstate the MMD and issue the STCW certificate
	Meets all requirements for reinstatement of the full operating authority, but does not meet the standards for issuance of an STCW certificate.	Reinstate the MMD, but do not issue an STCW certificate. See paragraph 4.d concerning the STCW certificate.
	Does not meet the requirements for reinstatement of full operating authority	Issue the MMD endorsed for continuity only