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| Sub-Committee on Standards  of Training and Watchkeeping  43th session  Agenda item 9 | STW43/9/…  20 October 2011  Original: ENGLISH |

*Note: the additions or modifications introduced to the VTS Committee draft by jcl are in red (except the wording added to format the document in accordance with the IMO rules)*

**Development of guidance for the implementation of the 2010 Manila AMENDMENTS**

**VTS Training in STCW for Navigating Officers**

**Submitted by the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA)**

**SUMMARY**

*Executive summary:* This document contains a proposal for developing guidance to the requirement contained in the Manila Amendments to the Seafarers’ Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Code, Table A-II/1, that officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships of 500 gross tonnage or more shall have an awareness of VTS.

*Strategic direction:* 5

*High-level action:* 5.2.4

*Planned output:* 5.2.4.2

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 16

*Related documents:* MSC 89/22/..

Manilla Amendments to the Seafarers’ Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Code, Table A-II/1.

1 At its 89th session, the Maritime Safety Committee considered a proposal from Australia and United States to address issues that may arise during the implementation and transition of the 2010 amendments to the STCW Convention by all Parties, with the aim of facilitating an orderly transition and anticipating complications which could otherwise undermine full and effective implementation of the amendments. Therefore, the Committee agreed to include, in the 2012-2013 biennial agenda of the STW Sub-Committee and in the provisional agenda for STW 43, a planned output on "Development of guidance for the implementation of the 2010 Manila Amendments", with a target completion year of 2014. The following proposal is submitted in accordance with the Committee’s decision.

2 Its aim is to facilitate effective communications and exchange of information between the bridge team and VTS Operators through a greater mutual understanding between the two parties of their respective functions and responsibilities.

**Background**

3 The purpose of Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) is to improve the safety and efficiency of navigation, the safety of life at sea and the protection of the marine environment and/or the adjacent shore area, worksites and offshore installations from possible adverse effects of maritime traffic.

4 The benefit of participation in a VTS is that it allows identification and monitoring of vessels, strategic planning of vessel movements and provision of navigational information and assistance. It can also assist in prevention of pollution and co-ordination of pollution response.

5 The types of service a VTS centre can offer include:

* The information service. It is provided by broadcasting information at fixed times and intervals or when deemed necessary by the VTS or at the request of a vessel, and may include for example reports on the position, identity and intentions of other traffic; waterway conditions; weather; hazards; or any other factors that may influence the vessel's transit.
* The navigational assistance service. It is a service to assist on-board navigational decision-making and to monitor its effects. This service is especially important in difficult navigational or meteorological circumstances or in case of defects or deficiencies. This service is normally rendered at the request of a vessel or by the VTS when deemed necessary.
* The traffic organization service. It concerns the operational management of traffic and the forward planning of vessel movements to prevent congestion and dangerous situations, and is particularly relevant in times of high traffic density or when the movement of special transports may affect the flow of other traffic. The service may also include establishing and operating a system of traffic clearances or VTS sailing plans or both in relation to priority of movements, allocation of space, mandatory reporting of movements in the VTS area, routes to be followed, speed limits to be observed or other appropriate measures which are considered necessary by the VTS authority.

6 Communication between a VTS and a participating vessel should be conducted in accordance with related IMO Guidelines and should be limited to information essential to achieve the objectives of the VTS. IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases and, in particular, Message Markers should be used where practicable.

7 In any VTS message directed to a vessel or vessels it should be made clear whether the message contains information, advice, warning or an instruction.

8 Vessels navigating in an area where vessel traffic services are provided should make use of these services. Depending upon governing rules and regulations, participation in a VTS may be either voluntary or mandatory. Vessels should be allowed to use a VTS where mandatory participation is not required.

**Discussion**

9 The Manila Amendments to the Seafarers’ Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Code, Table A-II/1, requires officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships of 500 gross tonnage or more to have an awareness of VTS. ~~However, there is evidence that this limited awareness is not sufficient.~~. Indeed, lack of knowledge from the master and the bridge personnel concerning VTS capabilities limits the vessels to use the service provided by a VTS. This may lead to confusion and/or hazardous situations and significantly reduces a vessel's situational awareness.

10 Efficient VTS depends, among other things, upon the effectiveness of the communications involved. The effectiveness of the information exchanges between the VTS, the master and the bridge team depends upon the mutual understanding each has for the functions and duties of the other.

11 Establishment of effective co-ordination between VTS, the master and the bridge team, taking due account of the ship's systems and equipment available to the master and the bridge personnel, will aid a safe and expeditious passage.

12 The VTS centre may be considered as an extension of the bridge resource management team. When the master and the bridge team have more knowledge about a VTS it will/can contribute to better teamwork between the VTS and the vessel. This will have an improving effect on efficiency of navigation, safety of life at sea and the protection of the marine environment.

13 Vessel traffic safety is more easily achieved when bridge personnel and VTS personnel work as a team.

**Proposal**

14 In the training of a VTS operator, a module is included regarding Nautical Knowledge, to enhance the VTSOs understanding of the shipboard operating procedures.

15 It is proposed to develop guidance to those specific amendments to the STCW Code ~~be expanded~~ to provide masters and officers a more comprehensive knowledge of VTS functions, responsibilities and procedures. It is therefore recommended that the proposed training should include material on VTS capabilities and services in accordance with IMO resolution A.857(20), including the use of simulation. IALA offers its services to assist drafting the relevant ~~material~~guidance.

**Action requested**

16 The Sub-Committee is invited to consider the proposal and to decide accordingly

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