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NAVIGATION AND VESSEL INSPECTION CIRCULAR NO. 1-91, CH-1

Subj: CHANGE TO NVIC 1-91, POLICY GUIDANCE AND RECOMMENDED QUALIFICATIONS FOR SMALL PASSENGER VESSEL DECKHANDS

Ref: (a) 46 CFR Part 15
(b) Marine Safety Manual, Volume III, Chapter 23
(c) Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular 05-01, Change 1

1. PURPOSE. This change revises Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 1-91 by adding guidelines for the recommended qualifications and training topics for deckhands engaged or employed on high-speed small passenger vessels. The guidelines introduce the concept of the QUALIFIED DECKHAND – HIGH SPEED, which compliments the SENIOR DECKHAND concept introduced in the original circular.

2. ACTION.

a. The guidelines contained in this change apply to Small Passenger Vessels and are intended for use by Small Passenger Vessel owner/operators and masters of vessels less than 100 gross tons. Guidance and recommended qualifications for deckhands on domestic High-Speed Small Passenger Vessels, not subject to the International Maritime Organization High-Speed Craft Code (HSC Code), is attached as enclosure (2).

b. OCMI's should use this circular as guidance during inspections for certification and reinspections, when evaluating training programs, and during drills conducted to ensure crew competency.

Distribution SDL No. 140

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c. Small passenger vessels vary greatly with regard to size, arrangement, and operating areas. An ideal training program would be specific to the vessel, and take into account the unique features of the operation. As a minimum the training program should cover:
(1) Operating conditions of the vessel on which the deckhand is employed;
(2) Overall vessel complexity;
(3) Number of passengers carried; and
(4) The specific duties the deckhand is expected to perform.

3. IMPLEMENTATION. Add enclosure (2), Amplified Guidance And Recommended Qualifications For Deckhands On High-Speed Small Passenger Vessels Not Subject To The HSC Code, to NVIC 1-91.

4. BACKGROUND.

a. Domestic regulations do not specifically address increased manning required for high speed vessels, but under 46 CFR 15.501, the OCMI is given broad authority to determine the minimum manning requirements on any inspected vessel. The HSC Code sets manning levels to cope with the increased difficulty of operating high speed vessels, but the HSC Code does not apply to vessels operated solely in the U.S. Additionally, the Coast Guard Marine Safety Manual, Volume III, Chapter 21, Section (S), offers manning and training standards for hydrofoils and air cushion vehicles. Where comparable risks are involved, the OCMI may determine it appropriate to apply the same standards to high-speed passenger vessels as are required for hydrofoils and air cushion vehicles.

b. The Coast Guard and the industry recognize that a Small Passenger Vessel's licensed officer(s) would be unable to navigate the vessel and effectively respond to emergencies such as fire, engineering casualties, collision, flooding, medical emergencies, man overboard, etc. without the assistance of trained and qualified deckhands.

c. The Coast Guard, in consultation with the industry, has determined that the best approach to improving deckhand training and qualifications is to allow the industry to undertake a voluntary training program which will provide an increased level of knowledge and skill for their crew members. The Coast Guard believes that because of the generally high level of responsibility and concern displayed by the industry that this approach will be both successful and cost effective.

5. DISCUSSION.

a. The employment and training of qualified deckhands is the responsibility of the marine employer (46 CFR 15.103). The Coast Guard is issuing, by means of this NVIC, recommended criteria for assessing the qualifications of an individual deckhand.

b. The Marine employer is responsible for ensuring that an individual engaged as a deckhand on a small passenger vessel:
(1) Meets the company's minimum physical requirements;

(2) Is familiar with the location of emergency/navigation equipment and procedures; and
(3) Has demonstrated the ability to respond to emergency situations.

c. This NVIC is not intended to be all encompassing nor indicative of the topics of training for every deckhand, but rather it is a general guide that should be adapted to individual vessel operations.

d. At the discretion of the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMI), some or all of the deckhands may be permitted to perform duties such as concessionaires, waiters or waitresses provided that they can readily respond to their regularly assigned deckhand duties. However, cooks and foodhandlers should not normally be accepted as deckhands, because of their employment status and good health practices.

e. The Coast Guard is responsible for determining that Small Passenger Vessels are manned with competent crews. The method of accomplishing this is left to the discretion of the OCMI. In general, this is accomplished by relying on the vessel inspection process including the proper performance of emergency drills and the questioning of the crew on duties assigned and/or a review of the company training program. There is no intent that company training programs undergo any formal Coast Guard approval process.

6. DISCLAIMER. While the guidance contained in this document may assist the industry, the public, the Coast Guard, and other Federal and State regulators in applying statutory and regulatory requirements, the guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements; nor is it itself a rule. Thus, it is not intended to nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party, including the Coast Guard, other Federal agencies, the States, or the regulated community.

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Encl: NVIC 1-91, CH-1, Encl (2) Amplified Guidance And Recommended Qualifications For Deckhands On High Speed Small Passenger Vessels Not Subject To The HSC Code

AMPLIFIED GUIDANCE AND RECOMMENDED QUALIFICATIONS FOR DECKHANDS ON HIGH SPEED SMALL PASSENGER VESSELS NOT SUBJECT TO THE HSC CODE

1. Purpose:

   a. The purpose of this enclosure is to provide recommended guidelines for a qualified deckhand on a high-speed vessel being operated in accordance with reference (c). This guidance applies to a qualified deckhand who will be a member of a bridge team while the vessel is underway, as discussed in reference (c).

   b. An owner may designate one crewmember to serve as senior deckhand and another to serve as the qualified deckhand (high-speed), if both positions are needed. In this case, the owner should ensure each individual's duties are clearly laid out in the operations manual. Additionally, this guidance does not prohibit a master from using any deckhand as an additional lookout as necessary.

   c. The OCMI should take into consideration the amount of time it is estimated that the senior deckhand will be on the bridge when determining the size of the vessel's crew, as this may necessitate the need for a second senior deckhand (e.g. one to perform the duties originally envisioned by NVIC 1-91).

2. Background:

   a. NVIC 05-01, Ch.1 promulgated guidance for high-speed vessels, which are not subject to the HSC Code. It contains recommended procedures to be used by the owner and the OCMI to aid in determining when the vessel's bridge team should consist of two qualified persons. At all times one of these persons must be a licensed officer. In many cases a qualified deckhand may be the second person.

   b. Due to the nature of high-speed vessels, and the expectation that the qualified deckhand will be a member of a bridge team on a regular basis, their training and qualification needs to be commensurate with their duties.

3. Discussion:

   a. Nothing in this guidance lessens the OCMI's authority to require a licensed mate for this position, nor does it imply that the qualified deckhand has the legal authority of a licensed mariner.

   b. Recognizing the vast differences in vessel designs and operating areas the details of the qualification standard will be decided during the conversations between the OCMI and the operator when they work through the bridge manning assessment in reference (c).

   c. While qualified deckhand programs are not subject to Coast Guard approval, it is recommended that new programs be submitted to the OCMI for review. This allows the OCMI to gain a better appreciation for the level of training being done in house.

Similarly, it is recommended that the operator invite the Coast Guard to audit their in house training programs, and make the training records readily available during the course of scheduled vessel inspections.

d. The qualified deckhand on a high-speed vessel may be limited to a particular geographic area. Depending on the variety of the vessels operated by a particular company it may be appropriate to further limit the designation to a particular vessel. Decisions regarding any limitations about the designation of a qualified deckhand should be incorporated into the vessel's operations manual.

4. Action: In addition to the training outlined in enclosure (1) of this NVIC the following are recommended topics that should be used to augment NVIC 5-01, CH-1 for a qualified deckhand on a domestic high-speed vessel (non-HSC Code).

RECOMMENDED QUALIFICATIONS FOR QUALIFIED DECKHANDS ON DOMESTIC HIGH-SPEED VESSELS (NOT OPERATED UNDER THE HSC CODE)

1. As noted in enclosure (1), every qualified deckhand should be at least 16 years of age. It is recommended that the qualified deckhand on a domestic high-speed vessel be at least 18 years of age. Although the regulations do not include physical standards for deckhands who do not hold a Merchant Marine License or Document, this is a safety sensitive position that may entail duties as a member of the bridge team. Operators that employ qualified deckhands in this capacity are encouraged to establish minimum physical requirements using the standards contained in 46 CFR 10.205(d) as a guide. The screening by physicians of potential qualified deckhands will help to ensure only physically competent persons are placed in positions that require alert and fit personnel. The deckhand should be qualified as to sight, hearing, and physical condition to perform all deckhand duties and be able to perform all duties associated with his or her duties as noted in the operations manual.

2. The qualified deckhand should be able to demonstrate the ability to carry out their duties as specified in the operations manual (NVIC 5-01, Ch-1), for emergency response and pollution prevention. Specifically, the ability in the following duties should be demonstrated:

   a. Man Overboard.

   b. Fire.

   c. Abandon Ship.

   d. Foul Weather.

   e. Medical Emergency.

   f. Collision.

3. The qualified deckhand whose duties include augmenting the bridge team during the course of routine operations, should be able to complete the following tasks:

   a. Demonstrate the ability to communicate bridge commands effectively with other crew members as a member of a bridge team.

   b. Demonstrate the ability to properly operate the VHF radio and the PA system.

   c. Be able to recognize and transmit sound signals.

   d. Demonstrate the ability to identify meeting, crossing and overtaking situations.

   e. Demonstrate the ability to identify lights, shapes, sounds.

   f. Demonstrate the knowledge of the local operating area (e.g. tides, currents, weather, obstructions, sensitivity to other waterway users, alternate safe docking sites.

   g. Demonstrate knowledge of applicable vessel characteristics and operating limitations (e.g. vessel turning characteristics and stopping distances).

   h. Demonstrate ability to operate the steering and propulsion systems in all modes, including autopilot.

4. Night operations: if the senior deckhand will be required on the bridge during night ops, the operator should determine the appropriate amount of training in the operating area at night. The operating manual should spell out the standards.

5. Radar: if the qualified deckhand is required to use and interpret radar information to assist with collision avoidance and/or navigation, it is recommended the deckhand should complete appropriate radar training, either through an in-house training program or through a formal school, as determined by the operator and the OCMI.

6. Anchoring: as noted previously the qualified deckhand will be called to operate the vessel in the event the master becomes incapacitated. In many areas the appropriate action might be to safely anchor the vessel and call for assistance. Therefore it is recommended that either the senior or the qualified deckhand be able to safely anchor the vessel.

7. Service Requirements: prior to being designated as the qualified deckhand, the Operator and the OCMI should determine the recommended service requirements. In addition to the service recommendations already described in this NVIC, the following should be taken into consideration:

   a. If the vessel operates at night, it should be determined how much familiarization is required during darkness. A minimum of 30 minutes of dark adaptation is recommended for any crewmember operating at night.

   b. Skills and training acquired on other vessels, or with other operators, may be taken into account when determining length of service requirements.

c. Experience of those characteristics unique to each port, vessel and conditions routinely encountered. (e.g. fog, bridge restrictions, fishing areas, anchorages, etc)

8. Crew Endurance Management: The qualified deckhand, whose responsibilities include maintaining individual alertness/performance levels during all operations, should be able to identify crew endurance risk factors and take appropriate action to control them

9. Additional recommendations: the OCMI and the operator may determine other abilities, training, and skills required of senior deckhands they feel may be applicable, due to special circumstances of the vessel, as previously noted.