



16721
CG-MMC Policy Letter
No. 05-23
October 24, 2023

From: M. Medina
COMDT (CG-MMC)

To: National Maritime Center

Subj: GUIDELINES FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR STCW ENDORSEMENTS AS
OFFICER IN CHARGE OF A NAVIGATIONAL WATCH AND MASTER OF
VESSELS OF LESS THAN 500 GT LIMITED TO NEAR COASTAL WATERS IN
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

1. PURPOSE. This policy letter provides guidance for qualifying for STCW endorsements limited to vessels of less than 500 GT for operations on near-coastal voyages in the vicinity of the Virgin Islands.
2. ACTION. The Coast Guard will use this policy to evaluate applications for STCW endorsements as Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch (OICNW) and Master of Vessels of Less Than 500 GT that will be limited to near-coastal waters in the Virgin Islands.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. CG-MMC Policy Letter 03-18 is cancelled.
4. BACKGROUND. On June 26, 2018, the Coast Guard published CG-MMC Policy Letter 03-18, *STCW Endorsements as Master of Vessels of Less Than 500 GT Limited to Near Coastal Waters in the Virgin Islands*. That policy letter provided guidance for mariners to qualify for endorsements as Master that are limited to near-coastal voyages on vessels carrying not more than 12 passengers operating between the United States Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands, not to exceed four hours and 12 miles from shore. This policy letter retains the guidance in CG-MMC Policy Letter 03-18, expands it to include guidance for endorsements as OICNW, and provides new guidance for qualifying for endorsements for voyages of greater duration and distance from shore.
5. DISCUSSION.
 - a. As specified in 46 CFR 11.301(f), 11.317(c), and 11.321(c), the Coast Guard may exempt mariners from meeting any individual knowledge, understanding and proficiency (KUP) specified in Table A-II/3 of the STCW Code. We have determined that a number of the KUPs in STCW Code Table A-II/3 are not applicable to certain vessels operating on near-coastal international voyages in the vicinity of the USVI. Accordingly, we will not require mariners to submit training and assessments associated with these KUPs for endorsements limited to vessels of less than 500 GT operating in the Virgin Islands.

Enclosure (1) to CG-MMC Policy Letter 05-23

- b. Guidance for qualifying for an STCW endorsement for OICNW and Master Limited to Near-Coastal Voyages Not to Exceed Four Hours and 12 Miles from Shore is provided in Enclosure (1).
 - c. Guidance for qualifying for an STCW endorsement for OICNW and Master Limited to Near-Coastal Voyages Not to Exceed 12 Days and 12 Miles from Shore is provided in Enclosure (2).
6. **DISTRIBUTION**. No paper distribution will be made of this policy letter. An electronic version will be located at <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Prevention-Policy-CG-5P/Commercial-Regulations-standards-CG-5PS/Office-of-Merchant-Mariner-Credentialing/CG-MMC-2/CG-MMC-2-New-Policies/>.
7. **DISCLAIMER**. This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a regulation. It is not intended to, nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party. This guidance represents the Coast Guard's current thinking on this topic and may assist industry, mariners, the general public, and the Coast Guard, as well as other federal and state regulators, in applying statutory and regulatory requirements. Alternative approaches for complying with these requirements may be acceptable if the approach satisfies the requirements of the applicable statutes and regulations.
8. **ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS**
- a. The development of this guidance and the general policies contained within it have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office in conjunction with the Office of Standards Evaluation and Development, Commandant (CG-REG). Pursuant to Department of Homeland Security Directive 023-01, Rev.1, associated implementing instructions, and Environmental Planning COMDTINST 5090.1 (series), which guide the Coast Guard in complying with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4370f), we have determined that this action is categorically excluded (CE) from further environmental analysis under paragraphs #A3, #L5 and #L56 in Appendix A, of Table 1 of DHS Directive Instruction Manual 023-01, Rev. 1. Our rationale for selecting these CEs is as follows. "Promulgation of rules, issuance of rulings or interpretations, and the development and publication of policies ... and other guidance ... that implement, without substantive change, statutory or regulatory requirements" or "...that interpret or amend and existing regulation without changing its environmental effect" are covered under DHS CE #A3. Promulgation of this policy and its associated guidance implements, without substantive change, the applicable Commandant Instruction or other federal agency regulations, procedures, manuals, and other guidance documents. Accordingly, Coast Guard CE #L5 applies. In addition, the policy letter includes elements that pertain to training, qualifying, licensing and disciplining maritime personnel. These latter aspects of the policy letter and its associated guidance are covered under Coast Guard CE #L56.
 - b. This guidance will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from the general policies in this guidance must be individually evaluated for

compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), DHS and Coast Guard NEPA policy, and compliance with all other environmental mandates.

9. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. All requests for changes and questions regarding implementation of this NVIC and/or requests for changes should be directed to the Mariner Credentialing Program Policy Division (CG-MMC-2), at (202) 372-2357 or MMCPolicy@uscg.mil.

#

- Encl: (1) Qualification Requirements for Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch and Master Limited to Near-Coastal Voyages Not to Exceed Four Hours and 12 Miles from Shore
- (2) Qualification Requirements for Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch and Master on Vessels of Less Than 500 GT Limited to Near-Coastal Voyages Not to Exceed 12 Days and 12 Miles from Shore

**QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICER IN CHARGE OF A
NAVIGATIONAL WATCH AND MASTER ON VESSELS OF LESS THAN 500 GT
LIMITED TO NEAR-COASTAL VOYAGES NOT TO EXCEED FOUR HOURS AND
12 MILES FROM SHORE**

1. SCOPE OF ENDORSEMENT. The STCW endorsement will be for a capacity as Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch (OICNW) or Master under 46 CFR 11.321 (for OICNW) or 46 CFR 11.317 (for Master) and Section A-II/3 of the STCW Code and include the following limitations:

Not Valid on Vessels 500 Gross Tons (GT) or More. Limited to Near-Coastal Voyages on Vessels Carrying Not More Than 12 Passengers Operating Between the United States Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands, Not to Exceed Four Hours and 12 Miles from Shore.

2. NATIONAL ENDORSEMENT. To be eligible for a limited STCW endorsement as OICNW, mariners must hold any national officer endorsement other than Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels (OUPV) that authorizes service as Mate on near coastal routes. For an endorsement as Master, mariners must hold any national officer endorsement, other than OUPV, authorizing service as Master valid for near coastal routes.
3. SERVICE.
 - a. For OICNW, applicants must provide either:
 - 1) Twenty-four months of service in the deck department on vessels operating on oceans, near-coastal waters and/or the Great Lakes. Service on inland waters, bays, or sounds that are navigable waters of the United States may be substituted for up to 50 percent of the required service. Experience gained in the engine department may be creditable for up to 3 months of the required service (46 CFR 11.321(a)(1)(i)); or
 - 2) Successful completion of an approved OICNW training program that includes 12 months of seagoing service (46 CFR 11.321(a)(1)(ii) and (iii)).
 - b. For Master, applicants must provide evidence of meeting the service for an STCW endorsement as OICNW above, and an additional 12 months of service as mate or other officer in charge of a navigational watch on vessels operating in oceans, near-coastal waters, and/or Great Lakes. Service on inland waters, bays, or sounds that are navigable waters of the United States may be substituted for up to 50 percent of the total required service. Experience gained in the engine department on vessels may be creditable for up to 1 month of the service requirement (46 CFR 11.317(a)(1)).
 - c. It is not necessary to have held an STCW endorsement as OICNW at the time service as the officer in charge of a navigational watch was obtained.
 - d. For purposes of crediting sea service, a day will be as specified in 46 CFR 10.232(h)(3) and should be at least 4 hours. A creditable day of service may include time spent on vessel maintenance and repair, and time preparing for and securing from a voyage, and may include more than one voyage in a single day.

4. TRAINING. Evidence of successful completion of the following training must be submitted to qualify for this limited endorsement:

- a. Basic Training. This training may be tailored to vessels of less than 500 GT (200 GRT) on near-coastal voyages. If basic training was completed more than 5 years before the date of application, the applicant must provide evidence of maintaining the standard of competence as specified in 46 CFR 11.302(b);
- b. Medical First Aid Provider, if not completed previously [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(i)];
- c. Electronic Chart Display Information Systems (ECDIS), for the endorsement to be valid on vessels with this equipment [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(v)];
- d. Radar Observer, for the endorsement to be valid on vessels with this equipment [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(vi)]; and
- e. Automatic Radar Plotting Aids (ARPA), for the endorsement to be valid on vessels with this equipment [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(vii)].

5. ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE.

- a. To qualify for a limited endorsement for OICNW or Master, mariners should submit evidence of successful completion of the assessment tasks in Enclosure (2) of Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 13-14 (or a Coast Guard approved alternative), with the exception of the following tasks that do not need to be completed:

1.4.B	2.2.B	5.2.B
1.4.C	2.2.C	5.2.D
1.5.A	2.2.D	5.2.E
1.6.A	2.2.F	6.1.A
1.6.B	2.3.A	6.1.B
1.6.C	2.3.B	8.1.A
1.10.A	2.4.A	9.1.A
1.10.B	3.2.C	9.2.A
1.10.C	3.3.A	9.3.A
1.10.D	3.6.A	9.4.A
1.13.A	3.7.A	10.1.A
2.2.A	4.1.A	

NVIC 13-14 is available at <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/NVIC/>.

- b. Tasks noted in NVIC 13-14 as only being required for Master do not need to be completed to qualify for endorsement as OICNW. Mariners seeking a raise in grade from OICNW to Master with the same limitation need only submit the assessment tasks noted as being only for Master. Mariners seeking an endorsement as Master who have not held an STCW endorsement as OICNW must submit evidence of completion of all assessment tasks for both OICNW and Master.

- c. The assessments from NVIC 13-14 may be tailored to the equipment and practices aboard the vessel(s) on which the endorsement will be valid, provided that approval for alternative assessments is received from the National Maritime Center prior to their use. Assessments may also be embedded in Coast Guard approved training for these endorsements. Guidance on Coast Guard approved training may be found in NVIC 3-14, Guidelines for Approval of Training Courses and Programs.
 - d. Assessments must be signed by a qualified assessor approved by the Coast Guard in accordance with 46 CFR 10.405. In order to facilitate the transition to this requirement, the Coast Guard will accept assessments that have been signed by an assessor who has not been Coast Guard approved until December 31, 2023, provided that the assessor meets the professional requirements in 46 CFR 10.405(a)(3) to assess competence for the specific endorsement. Until June 30, 2024, the Coast Guard will accept assessments for these endorsements signed before January 1, 2024, by mariners who have at least 1 year of experience on seagoing vessels of at least 50 GRT. To assess candidates for Mate, this experience should be as Mate or Master, and to assess candidates for Master, the experience should be as Master. After December 31, 2023, QAs must be approved by the National Maritime Center to conduct the assessment(s) (46 CFR 10.405).
 - e. Completion of assessments may be documented using the Record of Assessment in Enclosure (3) of NVIC 13-14.
6. RENEWAL OF ENDORSEMENT. To renew this limited endorsement, mariners should meet the applicable requirements in 46 CFR 10.227 to renew their national endorsement(s) and provide evidence of maintaining the standard of competence for Basic Training as specified in 46 CFR 11.302(b). Mariners may meet this requirement with BT courses that were approved for vessels of less than 200 GRT or 500 GT on near-coastal voyages.
7. REMOVAL OF LIMITATION.
- a. Regulation II/3, paragraph 2 of the STCW Convention specifies that masters on seagoing vessels of less than 500 GT that are not engaged on near coastal voyages must meet the competency standards for vessels of 500 GT or more.
 - b. To remove the limitation to vessels carrying not more than 12 passengers on voyages in the Virgin Islands not to exceed four hours and 12 miles from shore and to qualify for an STCW endorsement as OICNW or Master of Vessels of Less Than 500 GT Limited to Near-Coastal Waters, mariners should meet all requirements specified in 46 CFR 11.321 (for OICNW) or 46 CFR 11.317 (for Master) that were not met previously, including, but not limited to completion of the assessments noted in paragraph 5.a, above, and approved training for Advanced Firefighting and Proficiency in Survival Craft or Proficiency in Survival Craft-Limited.
 - c. If the mariner had qualified for this limited endorsement by completing Basic Training that was limited to vessels of less than 500 GT (200 GRT), the mariner must provide evidence of having completed BT that was not limited. If this training was completed more than 5 years before the date of application, the applicant must provide evidence of maintaining the standard of competence as specified in 46 CFR 11.302(b).

**QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICER IN CHARGE OF A
NAVIGATIONAL WATCH AND MASTER OF VESSELS OF LESS THAN 500 GT
LIMITED TO NEAR-COASTAL VOYAGES NOT TO EXCEED 12 DAYS AND 12
MILES FROM SHORE.**

1. SCOPE OF ENDORSEMENT. The STCW endorsement will be for a capacity as Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch (OICNW) or Master under 46 CFR 11.321 (for OICNW) or 46 CFR 11.317 (for Master) and Section A-II/3 of the STCW Code and include the following limitations:

Not Valid on Vessels 500 Gross Tons (GT) or More. Limited to Near-Coastal Voyages on Vessels Carrying Not More Than 12 Passengers Operating in the United States Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands, Not to Exceed 12 days and 12 miles from Shore.

2. NATIONAL ENDORSEMENT. To be eligible for a limited STCW endorsement as OICNW, mariners must hold any national officer endorsement other than Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessels (OUPV) that authorizes service as Mate on near coastal routes. For an endorsement as Master, mariners must hold any national officer endorsement, other than OUPV, authorizing service as Master valid for near coastal routes.

3. SERVICE.

- a. For OICNW, applicants must provide either:

- 1) Twenty-four months of service in the deck department on vessels operating on oceans, near-coastal waters and/or the Great Lakes. Service on inland waters, bays, or sounds that are navigable waters of the United States may be substituted for up to 50 percent of the required service. Experience gained in the engine department may be creditable for up to 3 months of the required service (46 CFR 11.321(a)(1)(i)); or
- 2) Successful completion of an approved OICNW training program that includes 12 months of seagoing service (46 CFR 11.321(a)(1)(ii) and (iii)).

- b. For Master, applicants must provide evidence of meeting the service for an STCW endorsement as OICNW above, and an additional 12 months of service as mate or other officer in charge of a navigational watch on vessels operating in oceans, near-coastal waters, and/or Great Lakes. Service on inland waters, bays, or sounds that are navigable waters of the United States may be substituted for up to 50 percent of the total required service. Experience gained in the engine department on vessels may be creditable for up to 1 month of the service requirement (46 CFR 11.317(a)(1)).

- c. It is not necessary to have held an STCW endorsement as OICNW at the time service as the officer in charge of a navigational watch was obtained.

- d. For purposes of crediting sea service, a day will be as specified in 46 CFR 10.232(h)(3) and should be at least 4 hours. A creditable day of service may include time spent on vessel maintenance and repair, and time preparing for and securing from a voyage, and may include more than one voyage in a single day.

4. TRAINING. Evidence of successful completion of the following training must be submitted to qualify for this limited endorsement:

- a. Basic Training. This training may be tailored to vessels of less than 500 GT (200 GRT) on near-coastal voyages. If basic training was completed more than 5 years before the

date of application, the applicant must provide evidence of maintaining the standard of competence as specified in 46 CFR 11.302(b);

- b. Medical First Aid Provider, if not completed previously [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(i)];
- c. Proficiency in Survival Craft (PSC) Limited, if not completed previously [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(iii) and 11.321(a)(3)(iii)]. This training may be tailored to vessels of less than 500 GT (200 GRT) that do not carry davit launched survival or rescue craft and the PSC endorsement will be limited to vessels of less than 500 GT and/or 200 GRT that do not carry davit launched survival or rescue craft;
- d. Electronic Chart Display Information Systems (ECDIS), for the endorsement to be valid on vessels with this equipment [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(v)];
- e. Radar Observer, for the endorsement to be valid on vessels with this equipment [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(vi)]; and
- f. Automatic Radar Plotting Aids (ARPA), for the endorsement to be valid on vessels with this equipment [46 CFR 11.317(a)(3)(vii)].

5. ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE.

- a. To qualify for a limited endorsement as OICNW or Master, mariners should submit evidence of successful completion of the assessment tasks in Enclosure (2) of Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 13-14 (or a Coast Guard approved alternative), with the exception of the following tasks that do not need to be completed:

1.4.B	3.2.C	8.1.A
1.5.A	3.3.A	9.1.A
1.10.A	3.6.A	9.2.A
1.10.B	5.2.B	9.3.A
1.10.C	5.2.D	9.4.A
2.3.A	6.1.A	
2.4.A	6.1.B	

NVIC 13-14 is available at <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/NVIC/>.

- b. Tasks noted in NVIC 13-14 as only being required for Master do not need to be completed to qualify for endorsement as OICNW. Mariners seeking a raise in grade from OICNW to Master with the same limitation need only submit the assessment tasks noted as being only for Master. Mariners seeking an endorsement as Master who have not held an STCW endorsement as OICNW must submit evidence of completion of all assessment tasks for both OICNW and Master described in NVIC 13-14, except those noted above as not required for these limited endorsements.
- c. The assessments from NVIC 13-14 may be tailored to the equipment and practices aboard the vessel(s) on which the endorsement will be valid, provided that approval for alternative assessments is received from the National Maritime Center prior to their use. Assessments may also be embedded in Coast Guard approved training for these endorsements. Guidance on Coast Guard approved training may be found in NVIC 3-14, Guidelines for Approval of Training Courses and Programs.

- d. Assessments must be signed by a qualified assessor approved by the Coast Guard in accordance with 46 CFR 10.405. In order to facilitate the transition to this requirement, the Coast Guard will accept assessments that have been signed by an assessor who has not been Coast Guard approved until December 31, 2023, provided that the assessor meets the professional requirements in 46 CFR 10.405(a)(3) to assess competence for the specific endorsement. Until June 30, 2024, the Coast Guard will accept assessments for these endorsements signed before January 1, 2024, by mariners who have at least 1 year of experience on seagoing vessels of at least 50 GRT. To assess candidates for Mate, this experience should be as Mate or Master, and to assess candidates for Master, the experience should be as Master. After December 31, 2023, QAs must be approved by the National Maritime Center to conduct the assessment(s) (46 CFR 10.405).
 - e. Completion of assessments may be documented using the Record of Assessment in Enclosure (3) of NVIC 13-14.
6. RENEWAL OF ENDORSEMENT. To renew a limited endorsement, mariners should meet the applicable requirements in 46 CFR 10.227 to renew their national endorsement(s) and provide evidence of maintaining the standard of competence for Basic Training as specified in 46 CFR 11.302(b). Mariners may meet this requirement with BT courses that were approved for vessels of less than 200 GRT or 500 GT on near-coastal voyages.
7. REMOVAL OF LIMITATION.
 - a. Regulation II/3, paragraph 1 of the STCW Convention specifies that officers in charge of a navigational watch on seagoing vessels of less than 500 GT that are not engaged on near coastal voyages must meet the competency standards for vessels of 500 GT or more.
 - b. To remove the limitation to voyages on vessels carrying not more than 12 passengers operating between the United States Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands not to exceed 12 days and 12 miles from shore, and to qualify for an STCW endorsement as Master of Vessels of Less Than 500 GT Limited to Near-Coastal Waters, mariners should meet all requirements specified in 46 CFR 11.317 that were not met previously, including, but not limited to completion of the assessments noted in paragraph 5.a above, and approved training for Advanced Firefighting.
 - c. If the mariner had qualified for this limited endorsement by completing Basic Training or PSC training that was limited to vessels of less than 500 GT and/or 200 GRT, the mariner must provide evidence of having completed BT or PSC that was not limited. If this training was completed more than 5 years before the date of application, the applicant must provide evidence of maintaining the standard of competence as specified in 46 CFR 11.302(b).