



NMA REPORT #R-206-B

DATE: June 22, 2011

124 North Van Avenue
Houma, LA 70363-5895
Phone: (985) 851-2134
Fax: (985) 879-3911
www.nationalmariners.org
info@nationalmariners.org

Asserting our right "...to petition the Government for redress of grievances."

Amendment 1, U.S. Constitution, Dec. 15, 1791

IMO ECDIS MODEL COURSE

[Source: By Joseph Keefe, Maritime Professional.com (MarPro) June 8, 2011 **Emphasis is ours!**]

Recently published by the IMO Secretariat as an STW43 paper on their IMO documents site, this version of the course (ECDIS Model Course 1.27 / 2010 edition) is meant for distribution provided it is unaltered in any way. The document should be regarded as **immediately relevant** to ECDIS training course development and approval processes.

The **ECDIS Model Course** revision – a very long work in progress, especially through the IMO validation process – is at last here. After considerable international peer review, modification and validation, the **IMO Subcommittee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping** (STW43) must still vote on it at their next meeting, scheduled to take place in June 2012. According to well-placed MarPro sources, approval of this final draft is expected. Assuming that happens, this revision will then officially replace the original MC 1.27.

The revision is important in that Part A (Framework) includes a simulation performance standard for ECDIS training, complete with added details and justification placed in the appendices for the instructor. Significantly, the new version also includes full course content as well as detailed guidance on exercises and practical underway assessment. In a nutshell, ECDIS training should be and now is all about practice in solo navigation training, as well as the all-important (graded) demonstration of the integration of ECDIS skills with all aspects of navigation. Also according to our MarPro source, "Because this revision is so focused on specific content in underway navigational contexts, MC 1.27 should no longer be regarded as generic training."

Although technically still in draft form – at least until June 2012 – the course itself will quite likely undergo no further edits, including any correction to the pagination errors, or inclusion of new reference texts. It is all over, beyond the screaming and shouting, apparently. In this case, "Final Draft" probably means, "comment all you want, but what you see is what you will get when the STW subcommittee finally votes on it." The current and likely final version is the product of more than 18 months of negotiations, but since the STW subcommittee only meets every 18 months to vote and conduct other business (they last met in January 2011), the vote for ratification will not take place (somewhat embarrassingly) until June 2012, well after implementation begins.

The likely strategy, going forward, will go something like this: Post a final draft as soon as possible – properly vetted – and hope it will have the same validity as an approved document. On a huge leap of faith, it is then up to stakeholders to believe this and move on with their own implementation. On this side of the pond, for example, the National Maritime Center (NMC) typically signs off on courses according to the approved IMO Model Courses. And, on a more positive note, the legacy trade schools and the maritime academies have about one year to get their courses re-written, staff trained and the bugs worked out of their simulator software. It's all good, right?

Built over a very long period, the **ECDIS amendments to STCW came only after years of getting the training right** – from courseware to simulation. With many competing interests in the Model Course creation business, along with those stakeholders who wanted to see the training requirements as watered down as possible, the IMO ultimately wanted something "clean" and they have gotten it. **In real practice and in the world of STCW, Model Courses are only regarded as guidance.** And yet, flag state authorities will usually choose not to produce their own regulations in training, instead insisting course developers to follow the Model Course nearly to the letter. Global guidance, at least in these instances, also translates into regulation at the local level.

In a world where so many mariners are content to get the lowest impact training possible, the incorporation of STCW into global training and competency schemes has a real place. The mariner, on one hand cannot be faulted for wanting to compress the ever-growing list of regulatory burdens that impinge upon his or her off time. On the other

hand, the typical passenger (you, for example) on a Boeing jetliner would not be content with a new pilot certified to be capable solely on the basis of a written test or a collection of unsupervised CBTs.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Professor Christian Hempstead told MarPro recently, “I believe that STCW, in spirit, offers the best chance our generation will have in returning to journeyman competence in the seafaring profession. If we mariners and trainers do not insist on demonstrated competence as a condition for the privilege of watchstanding, management and shore side systems will see to it that the profession is substantially overtaken by technological innovations. Lest we reverse the present trajectory, the risk of high losses through incompetence will become a self-fulfilling prophesy in short order.”

The formulation of meaningful Model STCW course content will be a key component to achieving and maintaining global mariner competence going forward. The new ECDIS Model course is a very good start. And that’s because the mentoring by senior mariners and indeed the credentialing of the new mariner by those who have also spent meaningful time at sea is fast becoming a thing of the past. – MarPro.

NOTES: STW stands for the IMO Subcommittee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping. The number 43 references the meeting event. The STW 43rd “session” is scheduled for June 2012 and the Model Course will be voted on as “Agenda item 3”. The document itself is regarded as Annex 1. Therefore, STW 43/3/1 is the title of the final draft of the revised model course. This same document is also now available at:

http://www.ecdisregs.com/get_pdf.php?id=102&action=download

*Joseph Keefe is the lead commentator of MaritimeProfessional.com. Additionally, he is Editor of the new **Maritime Professional** print magazine. You can also read his work in *MarineNews* and *Maritime Reporter* magazines. He can be reached at jkeefe@maritimeprofessional.com or at Keefe@marinelink.com. MaritimeProfessional.com is the largest business-networking site devoted to the marine industry. Each day thousands of industry professionals around the world log on to network, connect, and communicate*