

MARINE SAFETY MANUAL

CHAPTER 16: QUALIFIED RATINGS FOR MERCHANT MARINER'S DOCUMENTS

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b. Able Seaman-Limited.

Eighteen months service on deck of vessels of 100 gross tons or over which operate on the oceans, Great Lakes, or navigable waters of the United States;

c. Able Seaman-Special.

Twelve months service on deck on vessels operating on the oceans, Great Lakes or the navigable waters of the United States;

d. Able Seaman-OSV.

Six months service on deck on vessels operating on the oceans, Great Lakes, or the navigable waters of the United States.

3. Character Of Qualifying Service.

a. Background.

The sea service requirements for the able seaman ratings are set forth in 46 U.S.C. 7307 through 7311a. The source statute as recodified in 1983 was 46 U.S.C. 672. Originally, that statute provided for three types of able seaman ratings. The service required for what are now AB-Unlimited and AB-Limited had to be on vessels of 100 gross tons or more. In 1980, Congress modified the statute to, among other things, provide an orderly ladder of advancement based on experience levels. It created the current AB ratings and specified the required sea service to qualify for each. It eliminated the minimum vessel size requirement for qualifying sea service toward AB-Unlimited. It specified that the service must be service on deck and it defined "service on deck."

b. Service On Deck.

Qualifying service for all able seaman ratings except Able Seaman-MOU must be service on deck. Under 46 U.S.C. 7301, service on deck is "service in the deck department in work related to the work usually performed on board vessels by able seamen and may include service on fishing, fish processing, fish tender vessels and on public vessels of the United States." The intent of this requirement is to advance individuals to the rating of AB based on their familiarity with the various duties and tasks performed under that rating. The applicant's experience shall be reviewed to ensure that the basic experience is within these statutory guidelines. Although there is no minimum vessel size specified, evaluators should keep in mind the duties of an able seaman when evaluating sea service to determine if it can be considered "service on deck." [NOTE: Pub.L. 101-595, Title VI, 602(e)(3), Nov. 16, 1990, noted under 46 U.S.C. 7306, requires that any service that was used to qualify for Able Seaman-Fishing Industry shall be accepted for Able Seaman-Special or Unlimited. For Able Seaman-Limited, that service shall be accepted provided it was on board vessels of at least 100 gross tons.]

4. Service As A Maintenance-Person.
Time served in the maintenance department of a vessel, where a maintenance department is allowed by the vessel's COI, is considered 50% deck service and 50% engine service, unless the certificate of discharge specifies otherwise. The portion of service on deck may be credited toward required service for AB.
5. Qualifying Service On Mobile Offshore Units.
Experience in the deck department of a mobile offshore unit (MOU) is creditable toward able seaman endorsements even if the rig is temporarily bottom bearing. The following are considered deck department positions: roustabouts, roughneck, tool pusher, rig superintendent, driller, derrickman, and crane operator. In some cases a barge engineer on a moveable rig is part of the deck department. Companies must be contacted and a letter provided verifying the applicant's deck department service in each case. Welders are not part of the deck department and their service is not qualifying for AB.
6. Qualifying Service On Fixed Platforms.
Experience gained on fixed structures may substitute for up to one third of the service requirement for any able seaman rating provided that:
 - a. The structure is equipped with Coast Guard approved lifeboats/survival capsules;
 - b. The applicant shows evidence of having been trained in the use and maintenance of that equipment; and
 - c. All regular drills are held on the structure as evidenced in the company log.
7. Examinations.
Applicants for an AB-OSV or AB-MOU endorsement must be examined with the proper examination for that endorsement. Previous policy allowing applicants to test with the AB-Unlimited examination, then qualify as lifeboatman and present only sea service for the AB-Unlimited endorsement, is canceled. The nature of the examinations are different because the AB-OSV exam includes numerous questions on lifesaving not included in the AB-Unlimited exam. The AB-MOU exam is directed towards the knowledge, skills and abilities required on board an MOU. Previous applicants for AB-OSV or AB-MOU who passed the AB-Unlimited exam may receive the AB Special, Limited or Unlimited endorsement until March 25, 2000 in accordance with the policy in effect at the time of testing. RECs should give this new policy widespread publicity.

8. Able Seaman-Fishing Industry.

An individual may be rated as Able Seaman-Fishing Industry if the individual has at least 6 months service on deck on board vessels operating on the oceans or the navigable waters of the United States (including the Great Lakes). The endorsement Able Seaman-Fishing Industry permits the holder to serve as AB only on fish processing vessels.

9. Able Seaman-Sail.

An individual may be rated as Able Seaman-Sail if the individual has at least 6 months service on deck on sailing school vessels, oceanographic research vessels powered primarily by sail, or equivalent sailing vessels operating on the oceans or navigable waters of the United States (including the Great Lakes). The endorsement permits the holder to serve as AB only on sailing school vessels.

10. Able Seaman-MOU.

The regulations do not specify an endorsement as Able Seaman-MOU, but the Coast Guard instituted the endorsement in response to industry needs. Mobile offshore units (MOUs) include non-self-propelled and self-propelled mobile offshore units while under tow or at the exploration or exploitation site operating exclusively in mineral and oil exploration and exploitation. This includes drilling, accommodation, construction, maintenance, pipelaying and firefighting vessels. It does not include supply and towing vessels. The general requirements of 46 CFR 12.01 and 12.02 apply.

a. General Requirements For Able Seaman-MOU.

Applicants must be at least eighteen years of age, speak and understand the English language as required to perform able seaman and emergency duties, and meet the same physical standards that apply to the other able seaman endorsements. Able Seaman-MOU may only serve as AB on mobile offshore units.

b. Service Requirements For Able Seaman-MOU.

Applicants must have twelve months service (360 eight-hour days) on vessels of at least 65 feet or more on ocean, coastwise or inland routes. A U.S. Coast Guard approved training program may substitute for up to one third of the service. Such a course should include realistic survival craft and survival equipment training.

c. Examination(s) For Able Seaman-MOU.

Applicants must pass the examination for Able Seaman-MOU. Applicants must also complete the practical and written examination for either lifeboatman or lifeboatman-MOU prior to obtaining an Able Seaman-MOU endorsement.

11. Ratings As Boatswain, Etc.

The provisions of 46 CFR 12.05-11 automatically provide that the holder of an MMD endorsed as AB need not obtain an additional endorsement to serve as any unlicensed rating such as boatswain (the leading seaman and immediate supervisor of unlicensed deck personnel who supervises the maintenance of deck gear), etc. The rating of boatswain may be issued to an applicant who qualifies for the rating of AB in both experience and professional knowledge, but has defective vision or color blindness. [NOTE: Such a rating should only be issued if the applicant has at least 3 years of qualifying service and passes the required professional examination].

12. Able Seaman Endorsements For Licensed Deck Officers.

When deck officers qualify for an endorsement as able seaman they will be tested as follows:

License Held	AB Written	LB Written	AB Practical	LB Practical
Master/Mate 0 - 1600 GT	X	X	X	X
Master/Mate Any GT	None	None	None	X
Pilot	X	X	X	X
Operator	X	X	X	X

13. Service By Able Seaman - OSV.

46 U.S.C. 7310 is not specific as to the type of vessels that may employ an Able Seaman-OSV. It only says the vessels must be less than 500 gross tons and support exploration, exploitation or production of offshore mineral or energy resources.

Therefore, an Able Seaman-OSV may be employed aboard any such vessel, including an uninspected towing vessel, involved in this industry.

D. Lifeboatman Rating.

1. Qualification Requirements.

In order to qualify for the endorsement of lifeboatman, the applicant must produce documentary evidence of at least one of the requirements stated in 46 CFR 12.10-3. No certificate of efficiency as lifeboatman is required of any person employed on any unrigged vessel, except on a seagoing barge and on a tank barge navigating waters other than rivers and/or canals. For the purpose of this section, an unrigged vessel is a barge which is not self-propelled.

2. Practical Demonstration Of Skills.

In accordance with 46 CFR 12.10-5, candidates must successfully complete the written part of the examination and demonstrate their ability to serve as lifeboatman. Chapter 5 contains guidance on administering the practical examination.

3. Able Seaman Ratings That Include Lifeboatman Certification.

MMDs endorsed as able seaman (either unlimited, limited or special) need not carry a separate lifeboatman endorsement since these able seaman endorsements include certification as lifeboatman. However, mariner's that qualify for the lifeboatman endorsement should carry it on their MMD if they hold Able Seaman OSV, MOU, Sail or Fishing Industry since those ratings do not include certification as lifeboatman. They do include certification as lifeboatman limited to vessels to which the able seaman endorsement applies. [EXAMPLES: AB-OSV is a lifeboatman on OSVs; AB-Fishing Industry is a lifeboatman on fish processing vessels.]

E. Lifeboatman-MOU Rating.

The regulations do not specify an endorsement as Lifeboatman-MOU, but the Coast Guard instituted the endorsement in response to industry needs. Mobile offshore units are defined in the previous section dealing with Able Seaman-MOU. Lifeboatman-MOU may only serve as lifeboatman on mobile offshore units.

1. General Requirements.

Applicants must speak and understand the English language as required to perform lifeboatman and emergency duties.

2. Service Requirements.

To qualify for endorsement as Lifeboatman-MOU, applicants must have twelve months service on deck of vessels at least 15 gross tons on ocean, coastwise or inland routes. Service other than deck service on such vessels will be given half credit (e.g., 1 day credit for every 2 days served). An approved training program may substitute for all except 30 days of the sea service requirement. Such a course should include realistic survival craft and survival equipment training. Service on fixed structures (e.g., platforms) may be given half credit provided that:

- a. The structure is equipped with Coast Guard approved lifeboats/survival capsules;
- b. The applicant submits evidence of having been trained in the use and maintenance of that equipment; and
- c. All regular drills are held on the structure as evidenced in the company log.

3. Examination Requirements.

Applicants must pass the Lifeboatman-MOU or lifeboatman written examination. They must also pass the lifeboatman practical examination. For Lifeboatman-MOU the practical examination may be done using a lifeboat, a survival capsule or a liferaft. This recognizes that many of the units within the definition of MOU are equipped with either survival capsules or liferafts as primary lifesaving equipment.

F. QMED Ratings.

A qualified member of the engine department is any person who holds an engine department rating issued by the U.S. Coast Guard that is below licensed officer and above wiper.

1. Sea Service.

An applicant for an MMD endorsed as a QMED rating must have a minimum of six months of underway service in a rating at least equal to that of wiper. This service may have been aboard government or military vessels or other vessels not required to carry certificated personnel. OCMI's shall evaluate such service to ensure that it is the equivalent of service as a wiper. The presence of a "walk in" engine room, generators independent of the main engines and other independent auxiliaries indicates that a vessel's construction may require a crew member performing a wiper's duties.

2. Service As A Maintenance Person.

Time served in the maintenance department of a vessel, where a maintenance department is allowed by the vessel's COI, is considered 50% deck service and 50% engine service, unless the certificate of discharge specifies otherwise. The portion of service in the engine department may be credited toward the service required for a QMED rating.

3. Endorsement Of QMED Ratings.

All QMED ratings shall be endorsed separately. When a mariner has met the requirements for all QMED ratings, the document shall be endorsed "QMED-Any rating." The holder of a merchant mariner's document endorsed with one or more qualified member of the engine department ratings may serve in any unqualified rating in the engine department without specific endorsement.

4. Applicants Examined For Other Ratings At The Same Time.

An applicant for one QMED rating may be examined at the same time for all ratings for which eligible. An applicant being examined for one of the QMED ratings who has previously completed the QMED-General section within the past 12 months is not required to be tested on this section again.

5. Endorsement For Designated Duty Engineers (DDEs).

Under 46 CFR 12.02-11(d)(2), Designated Duty Engineers of 4000 horsepower and unlimited horsepower qualify to have their MMDs endorsed as "Any unlicensed rating in the engine department." Designated Duty Engineers of 1000 horsepower do not qualify.

G. Tankerman Ratings.

See Chapter 17

