



September 17, 2008

Flashing Light Examinations at RECs

Effective November 1, 2008, the Coast Guard will discontinue offering the flashing light examination at its Regional Examination Centers (RECs). Mariners applying for their first issuance of an STCW certificate as Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch, and/or for a raise in grade of an unlimited tonnage deck license, will now be required to take a Coast Guard approved *Visual Communications (Flashing Light)* course in lieu of testing at an REC.

In recent years, RECs have given this exam very infrequently and most mariners go to an approved course to satisfy the flashing light requirement. Some RECs have not offered the exam for over five years. At present, more than half of the 17 RECs lack the equipment needed to give the flashing light exam. Mariners who request the exam at these RECs are advised to either go to another REC or to one of many approved *Visual Communications (Flashing Light)* courses.

There are currently 39 approved courses that will substitute for the Coast Guard exam. These are distributed throughout the country and most mariners will have a course equidistant to or closer than an REC. Approved courses also offer the mariner the benefit of giving the test at a slower transmission speed, four words per minute vice the six words per minute that had been given at the RECs.

For additional information about the flashing light examination, see National Maritime Center Guidance Document 02-05, available on our web site at <http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/>. Lists of Coast Guard approved courses are also available on our web site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Stalfort".

David C. Stalfort
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard

Please e-mail comments, complaints and suggestions to iasknmc@uscg.mil.