

Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) History

Until the advent of the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention, the focus of marine safety was on standards for vessels structures, systems, and equipment. More recently, the international maritime community began to realize that human factors play a dominant role in the prevention of marine casualties.

STCW 1978 was adopted on July 7, 1978.

As a first step to address the human factor, STCW 1978 provided a means to standardize training, certification, and watchkeeping requirements for seafarers worldwide.

1995 – First major revision

The 1995 amendments took the process an important step further. They represented a major revision of the Convention in response to a recognized need to bring the Convention up to date and to respond to critics who pointed out many vague phrases, such as “to the satisfaction of the Administration,” which resulted in different interpretations being made.

The 1995 amendments entered into force on February 1, 1997. One of the major features of the revision was the division of the technical annex into regulations, divided into chapters as before, and a new STCW Code, to which many technical regulations were transferred. Part A of the Code is mandatory, while Part B is recommended.

Another major change was the requirement for parties to the Convention to provide detailed information to IMO concerning administrative measures taken to ensure compliance with the Convention.

On February 1, 1997, the 1995 amendments entered into force.

2010 – Second major revision

In 2007, IMO started a comprehensive review of the entire STCW Convention and Code. The IMO adopted amendments from this review on June 25, 2010, in Manila, Philippines, and they entered into force on January 1, 2012. These amendments are aimed at bringing the Convention and Code up to date with developments since they were initially adopted and to enable them to address issues that are anticipated to emerge in the foreseeable future.

The critical changes include:

- Improved measures to prevent fraudulent practices associated with certificates of competency and strengthened evaluation process (monitoring of Parties' compliance with the Convention)
- Revised requirements on hours of work and rest, and new requirements for the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse, as well as updated standards relating to medical fitness for seafarers
- New certification requirements for able seafarers
- New requirements relating to training in modern technology such as electronic charts and information systems (ECDIS)
- New requirements for marine environment awareness training and training in leadership and teamwork
- New training and certification requirements for electro-technical officers
- Updating of competence requirements for personnel serving on board all types of tankers, including new requirements for personnel serving on liquefied gas tankers
- New requirements for security training, as well as provisions to ensure that seafarers are properly trained to cope if their ship comes under attack by pirates
- Introduction of modern training methodology including distance learning and web-based learning
- New training guidance for personnel serving on board ships operating in polar waters
- New training guidance for personnel operating Dynamic Positioning Systems.

For more information, visit the [IMO STCW webpage](#).