

## STCW Frequently Asked Questions: Security Endorsements

- 1. Does an endorsement as Security Awareness (SA) or Vessel Personnel with Designated Security Duties (VPDSD) require the mariner to at least hold an entry level credential (Ordinary Seaman, Wiper, and/or Food Handler)?**

No, you do not have to hold an entry level credential in order to receive an endorsement as SA or VPDSD. When applying, you will need to submit an application, 719K/E, and evidence that you qualify for SA or VPDSD. You will also need to enroll for a Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

- 2. What are the STCW Security Awareness and Vessel Personnel w/ Designated Security Duties endorsements for?**

All mariners serving on vessels engaged on voyages to which the STCW applies must have training in and an endorsement for Security Awareness. If any of their assigned duties on ship will include security of the vessel, they must also hold the VPDSD endorsement. The STCW regulation VI/6 covers both capacities. Depending on what you qualify for, you will have VPDSD and/or SA listed under the capacity section of your credential.

- 3. I already have Vessel Security Officer (VSO). Do I need to get these endorsements added to my credential?**

If you already hold VSO, you are qualified for VPDSD and SA. On your next credential transaction those endorsements will be added to your credential. If you want, you can submit an application now to have them added. If that is your only transaction on that application, there will be no charge and you will receive a single page endorsement to add to your credential.

- 4. Who needs the new security endorsements, and when do they have to have them?**

The 2010 amendments to the STCW require all mariners serving on a vessel to which the STCW applies to have endorsements for security awareness. All persons assigned specific security duties must have the VPDSD endorsement. The 2010 STCW amendments entered into force on January 1, 2012. While the United States has yet to enact regulations requiring mariners to comply with the 2010 STCW amendments, they are in effect internationally. Difficulties such as vessel detention may be encountered if mariners on foreign voyages to which STCW applies do not have the new endorsements.

## **5. Do I have to take a course to get one of the new security endorsements?**

Not necessarily, for VPDS, mariners could take a course or provide documentation attesting to seagoing service with designated security duties OR performance of security functions equivalent to designated security duties for 6 months in the preceding 3 years. See Coast Guard Policy Letter 12-06 for more details.

## **6. I recently took a course called “Vessel Personnel with Specific Security Duties.” Can I get the new endorsements because I took this course?**

Yes, provided that the course was approved by Det Norske Veritas (DNV) under the voluntary program operated by Maritime Administration (MARAD). The VPSSD course approvals for DNV and MARAD are valid. A mariner will be issued an endorsement for VPDS and SA upon submission of an application and course completion certificate from a course that was approved under the MARAD program.

## **7. Will there be a fee for security endorsements after March 24, 2014?**

Consistent with 46 CFR Table 10.219(a), no fees will be charged for STCW endorsements on existing MMCs, unless the mariner is seeking a renewal or raise in grade of their MMC. In that case, the application will be processed as a renewal under 46 CFR 10.227 or processed as a raise in grade under 46 CFR 10.231, and the appropriate fees will be charged.

## **8. On the NMC website, there is an STCW FAQ which states that a mariner needs to have a drug test to apply for a security endorsement as VPDS and SA, but in the final rule, 46 CFR 12.625 does not state that. Can you please clarify?**

There is no requirement for a chemical test for dangerous drugs for any of the three vessel security endorsements. These individuals will be under the testing regime of 46 CFR Part 16 and generally will hold an endorsement that already requires drug testing. The NMC's STCW FAQ has been amended.

## **9. Can you please confirm that the deadline for the requirement to obtain the VSPDS endorsement has been extended to March 24, 2014?**

Policy Letter 12-06 is still the current guidance on security endorsements until March 24, 2014. International requirements to hold the endorsements by January 1, 2014, are still effective. We intend to provide updated guidance in a NVIC after March 24, 2014.

**10. (\*\*ADDED 02/14/14\*\*) Is the requirement to hold a security endorsement based on the credential I hold or is it a manning requirement? For example, I serve on a vessel of less than 200 GRT; however, I hold an endorsement for master of not more than 200 GRT.**

As discussed on page 78010 of the preamble to the final rule, regulations VI/5 and VI/6 of the 2010 Amendments apply only to vessels of 500 GT or more. The STCW security requirements only apply to vessels subject to the STCW Convention. The manning requirements for security personnel on U.S. flag vessels only apply to seagoing vessels of 500 GT or more. There is still a security training requirement under the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA), in 46 CFR 104.220.

**11. (\*\*ADDED 02/14/14\*\*) What specific information needs to be on the letter from my employer attesting to my service in order to obtain an endorsement as vessel personnel with designated security duties?**

46 CFR 12.625(a)(1) states that an applicant for this endorsement must present satisfactory documentary evidence, such as a letter signed by a company official, stating that the applicant meets the requirements in 33 CFR 104.220. Alternatively, the applicant may submit a certificate of completion from a Coast Guard-accepted or Coast Guard-approved course, of meeting the same requirements.

**12. (\*\*ADDED 02/14/14\*\*) Do vessel security endorsements have to be renewed?**

No, the endorsements do not have to be renewed. However, the medical certificate and MMC do have to be renewed.

**13. (\*\*ADDED 03/24/14\*\*) How does a mariner obtain a valid STCW endorsement for vessel personnel with designated security duties (VPDSD) or security awareness (SA) after 24 March 2014 without having to complete a Coast Guard-accepted or Coast Guard-approved course?**

The requirements for obtaining an endorsement as VPDSD are located in 46 CFR 12.625. The requirements for obtaining an endorsement as SA are located in 46 CFR 12.627. Mariners need to submit an application that meets the requirements of Parts 10 and 12.

**14. (\*\*ADDED 03/24/14\*\*) Which U.S. mariners are required to have a security endorsement as vessel personnel with designated security duties (VPDSD)?**

Mariners serving on vessels to which STCW applies, who meet the definition below, must have an endorsement as VPDSD. Those mariners serving on vessels to which STCW does not apply must meet the requirements of 33 CFR 104.220.

46 CFR 10.107 defines vessel personnel with designated security duties as “a person, excluding the designated security officer (e.g., Company Security Officer (CSO), as defined in 33 CFR chapter I, subchapter H, and Vessel Security Officer (VSO)), having specific security duties and responsibilities in accordance with the ship security plan.”

**15. (\*\*ADDED 07/07/14\*\*) I currently have a Vessel Security Officer (VSO) endorsement on my document. Do I need to submit an application for the new security sticker also?**

If you already have an endorsement as VSO, you do not need any additional endorsements on your MMC. As discussed in section 7.b of enclosure (2) of NVIC 02-14 (Grandfathering and Transitional Provisions for Merchant Mariner Credentials), an MMC with a VSO endorsement will also be endorsed with both the Vessel Personnel Designated with Security Duties (VPDSD) and Security Awareness (SA) endorsements at the next renewal or during the application process for the endorsement.

**16. (\*\*ADDED 07/07/14\*\*) For those crew members who have undergone security training prior to 24 March 2014 and have the course completion certificate in their file, do they need to submit application for the new security sticker?**

Those crew members who have undergone security training prior to 24 March 2014, and have the course completion certificate in their file, will need to submit an application for the new security endorsements if not already issued.

**17. (\*\*ADDED 07/07/14\*\*) What must be submitted as “documentary evidence of meeting the requirements” mentioned in 46 CFR 15.1113(c)? My company is a USCG certified VPDS course provider and we give the students the required certificate/documentation to meet this statement. However, how else can a mariner meet the documentation requirement? Can an employing company simply give them a piece of letterhead that says “John Smith meets all the requirements set forth in 33 CFR H 104.225” without physically demonstrating 104.225 (a) - (n), certified by the Company Security Officer (CSO)?**

To qualify for an STCW endorsement as VPDS, a mariner must present satisfactory documentary evidence, such as a certificate or letter signed by a company official.

**18. (\*\*ADDED 07/07/14\*\*) The IMO site states: “Guidance on training and certification requirements for ship security officers and seafarers with designated security duties has been agreed by IMO, to address practical difficulties seafarers have reportedly experienced in obtaining the necessary security certification under the 2010 Manila amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) and STCW Code.” The guidance recommends that, until 1 July 2015 relevant training under section 13 (Training, drills and exercises on ship security) of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code should be accepted as being equivalent to that required under the STCW Convention and Code. How does this impact U.S. mariners/US vessels if at all? Or does the 24 March 2014 date stand?**

The Coast Guard strongly encourages owners and operators of U.S.-flagged vessels subject to STCW to ensure that mariners obtain the STCW security endorsements as soon as possible. See the Coast Guard’s [Marine Safety Information Bulletin 06-14](#).

**19. (\*\*ADDED 07/07/14\*\*) With the recent publication of MSIB 06-14, regarding Uniform Approach on Treatment of Mariner Security Training Certification; under the 2010 Manila Amendments to the STCW Convention, does this mean that a current mariner could still apply for a VPDS endorsement with a letter stating that they have a minimum of six months of sea service within the previous three years aboard ships that conduct security drills in order to meet the requirements, or would they now have to attend an approved VPDS class?**

MSIB 06-14 discusses the enforcement of security endorsement requirements. Applicants seeking these endorsements after 24 March 2014 must meet the requirements of 46 CFR 12.625.

**20. (\*\*ADDED 07/07/14\*\*) Is it true that all mariners employed or engaged in any capacity on ships which are required to comply with the ISPS Code must complete approved security awareness (or higher) training and get an endorsement on their MMC by 1 January 2014? Unless their sea service began before 1 January 2012, in which case they could obtain this certification by simply documenting six months of sea service during the preceding three years, as long as it was accomplished by 1 January 2014?**

Yes, all mariners on vessels to which the ISPS Code applies must be in compliance with the training requirements by 33 CFR 104.220 and 104.225. After 24 March 2014 mariners seeking endorsements as VPDS or security awareness must comply with the requirements found in 46 CFR 12.625(a) or 12.627(a), as appropriate.

**21. (\*\*ADDED 07/07/14\*\*) For towing vessels subject to STCW, embarked on national voyages only and without a security plan, is there a requirement for STCW security training and endorsements?**

Onboard a seagoing vessel (as defined in 46 CFR 10.107) of 500 GT or more to which the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code applies, the requirements for STCW security training and endorsements apply. If your vessel is less than 200 GRT, and is engaged exclusively on domestic near-coastal voyages, then it is not subject to any obligation for the purposes of the STCW Convention.

**22. (\*\*ADDED 05/27/15\*\*) Security endorsements: The technicians on my vessel are standing security watches at the gangway and, as such, we are requiring them to obtain entry level and VPDS endorsements to meet the regulatory requirements. Please clarify the medical application requirements for these technicians.**

In 46 CFR Table 1 to section 10.302(a), the regulations require only a CG-719K/E for these applicants.