

Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) Implementation in the United States

1979 – 1984: Department of State submitted the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, to the Senate for advice and consent. The President signed the Convention.

1988: Completed regulatory project to revise United States (U.S.) licensing requirements to prepare for ratification of the STCW 1978 Convention.

May 1991: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on the STCW 78.

July 1991: The Senate ratified STCW 78.

October 1991: The STCW entered into force. U.S. Coast Guard began issuing STCW certificates as endorsements to the U.S. licenses.

1993-1995: The Coast Guard held numerous public meetings around the country regarding proposed Convention Amendments.

1995: STCW is amended with an entry into force date of February 1, 1997. The amended Convention expanded details for training, certification and watchkeeping.

1996: The Coast Guard published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM).

1997: The Coast Guard published an Interim Final Rule (IR) on June 26, 1997, titled Implementation of the 1995 Amendments to STCW, which outlined changes to the regulations governing the credentialing of merchant mariners. Four Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circulars were also published. The purpose of the IR was to ensure that U.S. merchant mariner credentials would meet International Maritime Organization standards, thereby reducing the possibility of U.S. vessel detention in a foreign port for non-compliance with the STCW Convention.

February 1997: Vessel Familiarization and Basic Safety Training for all seafarers with designated safety or pollution prevention duties became effective.

2009: The Coast Guard published a Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (SNPRM) on November 17, 2009, which updated the changes to the IR from 1997 and incorporated all of the 1995 amendments to the STCW Convention and Code.

2009: In response to comments received from the public and the Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee regarding the SNPRM, the Coast Guard issued a notice in the Federal Register that a different regulatory approach was being considered to implement the STCW amendments into U.S. regulations.

2011: On August 1, 2011, the Coast Guard published a revised SNPRM, which proposed implementation of all STCW amendments, including the 2010 Manila amendments, as well as changes to domestic endorsements.

2013: A Final Rule is in the clearance process.