

IFSMA Paper

This paper was approved by the National Council. I am sure that you will agree it is controversial, and it was intended to be. I was a little surprised that the delegates did not chastise me for the paper, but oddly enough there was more agreement than I was expecting and little condemnation for the opinions stated.

As a result of the paper the delegates supported a resolution which is printed below.

RES 2/2013 - Qualifications for Command

The delegates of the 39th IFSMA Annual General Assembly held in Melbourne on 16 and 17 April 2013

Recognized that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has undertaken to review the content of the Seafarers' Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention at least every ten years;

that technology, Laws and Regulations, policies and guidelines are continually changing; and that training and examination of seafarers for certificates of competency do not, alone, qualify a seafarer for the responsibilities of the position identified in the Certificate of Competency;

Recommend that the review of the STCW be commenced at the earliest opportunity with the aim of removing those sections from the syllabi that are redundant to the necessary knowledge and operational functions of seafaring;

adding to the syllabi sections that more accurately address technological changes, Laws and Regulations and the functions required by the certificate holders; and including in the syllabi the ancillary training and courses required to be undertaken before the holder of the certificate of competency be allowed to undertake the position identified in the Certificate of Competency.

My thanks to the CMMC members who aided me in the development of this paper.

The other resolutions developed by the IFSMA delegates can be found on the IFSMA Web page at www.ifsma.org, clicking [Papers and "Minutes are available here"](#) under the heading **"IFSMA 39th Annual General Assembly, was held in Melbourne, Australia April 16 & 17, 2013,"** and clicking ["View Resolutions passed by the AGA"](#).

The Role of the Master

*Peter Turner, Company of Master Mariners of Canada
for IF SMA Annual Review, Melbourne Australia, April 2013*

My purpose in presenting this paper is to bring attention to the role, qualifications, authority and responsibilities of the Master in today's Merchant Navy. On my first attempt at this project I reviewed the STCW and the annexes and developed a paper based on these and other international marine conventions. At the termination of that paper I attempted to draw some conclusions from the study, but found that the conclusions were not supported by the information brought forward in my paper; principally because the role of the Master is not met by the qualifications outlined in the STCW.

The STCW name has changed from International Convention on *Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers*, (1978) to *Seafarers' Training, Certification and Watchkeeping* (1995). It was created as a means of producing equally qualified and trained Officers regardless of their country of training. The standards of certification developed in the Convention were the minimum requirement to meet accreditation. Training standards are left, by and large, to the discretion of state issuing the accreditation.

- STCW and Revisions
- 1978 - Convention signed 7 July 1978
 - 1984 - entered into force
 - 1995 - significant amendments
 - Port State control
 - IMO Oversight of Standards
 - Familiarization training and basic safety training
 - Foreign seafarers required to meet the standards of flag state
 - Rest periods
 - 2010 - Manila Amendments June 2010
 - 2012 - entered into force 1st January
 - 2017 - Transition period until 1st January
 - No amendments for Management training for Masters

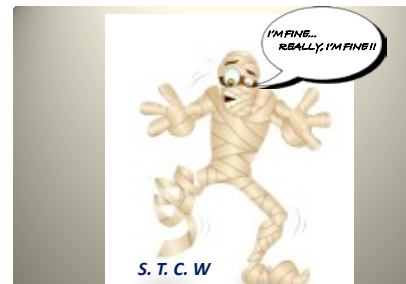
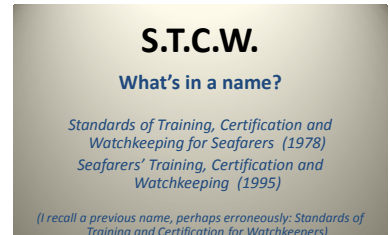
document, but a series of Annexes built on to the original convention; and they have developed as the focus of the world, and the equipment aboard ship, have changed.

The maxim, "If it ain't broke, don't fix!" seems to be well utilised in the deliberations of the IMO. The trouble is that the machinery of the STCW is getting fatigued and is being encumbered by the tools and repairs (annexes) put in place to maintain it.

- (some) Ancillary Courses
- Global Maritime Distress Safety System
 - Automatic Radar Plotting Aid
 - Electronic Chart Display and Information System
 - Simulated Electronic Navigation
 - Marine Emergency Duties (named differently by Flag States)

 - Specific trade and ship type courses

Certificates of Competency meeting the requirements of the STCW need additional endorsements and ancillary courses before a holder of a certificate is qualified to take up the position identified in the Certificate of Competency.



STCW identifies the qualifications needed to take up the position of Master, but cover only part of the responsibilities that fall to the Master in the role as the person responsible for all aspects of safety of life and equipment, security, protection of the environment and managing the functions of the day to day operations. A Master needs to be adept in human relations law, emergency management, health and welfare guidelines and legislation, international environmental law, corporate law, insurance and liability, standards of the appropriate classification society, public relations and dealing with the news media, budgeting and budgetary control and accounting; to name but a few.

The Master in the modern merchant navy is no longer “Master under God” but because of the technological advances in communications equipment, the Head Office, local Agents and port state government agencies have recourse to “advise” and direct the Master. Nevertheless, in the event of any marine incident, environmental damage, accident or unforeseen occurrence, the Master is the chosen one to be castigated, charged with an offence, penalised or fined, incarcerated and criminalised. It must also be borne in mind that the Company’s interests do not necessarily align with those of the Master.

In order to verify the roles of the members of the ships complement and the specific operations to be undertaken, IMO identified the need for, and developed, the ISM Code and the Safety Management System aboard. What this has accomplished is a code that enables government inspectors to castigate the Master and the crew for non-compliance. It also can be used as a tool to support the claims at a court of inquiry where the ship, the master or the company are implicated in an incident.

In the event of a pollution incident, the international community has recognised that the clean up process cannot be the responsibility of the Master alone, and has developed a position identified as the “Designated Person Ashore.” The role of this person; principally the liaison between the ship and the senior management of the company; is in effect a recognition that the Master can be overwhelmed by the bureaucratic wrangling associated with such an event.

What qualification does the Master have to justify the position where he or she is responsible for the safe conduct of all functions aboard the vessel? Undoubtedly, the safety of navigation and cargo operations are functions where the background as a deck officer and watchkeeper ensure this competence. The Certificate of Competency examinations will endeavour to provide the Master with background knowledge to understand the principal functions, but not the complexities, of other departments. Experience over time will aid in this knowledge, but, returning to the question; what qualification does the master have to carry out his or her role?

REQUIRED FOR COMMAND

IMO approved certification
Appointed by the Company
Responsible for all aspects of Safety and operations of the vessel.

Insufficient training in Environmental, Business, Criminal, Human Relations, Health and Welfare, Public Relations, and many other Laws, Regulations and guidelines.

Questions arising from this:

This is a wake-up call to all who have an interest in the operation of ships, either seagoing or in the marine industry ashore. The ship, personnel and equipment under the executive control of the Master are valuable and high profile, supporting a nation's trade and in the event of an accident or incident capable of causing extensive damage to third party infrastructure, the environment, the industry and the "trademark" of the company.

Questions arising

- Does the Master receive sufficient training to meet role?
- Is there an opportunity for non deck department person to be given command?
- Are STCW training standards sufficiently geared towards the authority, responsibility and liability of Command?

How long will it be before a ship owner, a nation state or the Master recognises that the STCW is not a sufficient instrument to qualify a person for command?

Is there an opportunity to qualify someone for command of a vessel who has not been trained in the deck/ navigation watchkeeping/ cargo operation mode?

Are the qualifications of any of the STCW Certifications suitable to place upon a person the authority, responsibility and liability of command?

Must command be a purview of the deck department?

Recognising that a vessel's prime purpose is to safely and competently carry passengers and cargo to the designate destination, should the command of the vessel be allowed to be undertaken by an individual who has limited qualifications in this primary purpose?

Will a company provide courses for additional qualifications for the holder of a Certificate of Competency as a Master, in order that the position of command is undertaken by a person with the required knowledge and experience?

Conclusions.

There is an urgent need for a study of the STCW and its annexes in order to ascertain how the ancillary courses can be brought into the body of the syllabi for examinations for Certificates of Competency. The examination syllabi need extensive review, removing redundant course matter and inserting into the syllabi the capability of including modern, and future, modifications for equipment, policies and responsibilities. Competency based training must be developed to suit the trades where specific training is required, eg tankers and gas carriers, dynamic positioning.

It is necessary to undertake a review of the course content needed to meet the qualifications required for the role of command, bearing in mind the changes in policy, technologies,

Conclusions

- STCW needs review and overhaul
- STCW Course content needs review and modification to meet the needs of command
- The Commanding Officer must have the authority and sufficient properly trained personnel and properly maintained equipment to carry out the role of command

equipment, and manning, as well as business management to meet the requirements of the profession

Under existing legislation and guidelines training must be in place for an individual to undertake the functions for which that person is involved or oversees. This applies to equally to masters as well as other crew members.

It is necessary to ensure that the Master (or commanding officer) in the role as a chief executive officer on board a vessel has sufficient authority, trained personnel and equipment, to carry out these responsibilities.

Think about it...

**Who do you want
in command of
your ship?**

From STCW document:

Function means a group of tasks, duties and responsibilities, as specified in the STCW Code, necessary for ship operation, safety of life at sea or protection of the marine environment