

STCW Frequently Asked Questions

NOTE: Throughout this document, specific NVICs are referenced. These are Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circulars, which provide additional guidance to the regulations. All may be located via the [Regulations & Policy page of the NMC website](#), or directly, on the [United States Coast Guard's NVIC page](#).

1. Am I required to take Basic Training (BT) to get security endorsements?

BT is not required for Security Awareness (SA) or Vessel Personnel with Designated security Duties (VPDSD). For all other STCW endorsements, valid BT is required.

2. Does an endorsement as SA or 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, drug test, 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).

3. What are the STCW SA and VPDSD 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.

4. Who needs the security endorsements?

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.

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

It depends on the security endorsement requested. Vessel Security Officer (VSO) requires certificate of completion of a Coast Guard accepted or Coast Guard approved VSO course. VPDS or SA requires a certificate or letter signed by a company official, or a certificate of completion of a Coast Guard accepted or Coast Guard approved course. See NVIC 21-14 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 the course was completed with 5 years of the application date and 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. What do the Able Seafarer-Deck (AS-D) and Able Seafarer-Engine (AS-E) endorsements allow a mariner to do?

AS-D and AS-E are the STCW counterparts to the U.S. ratings of Able Seaman (AB) and QMED. These STCW endorsements are required by mariners serving as AB or QMED on vessels that are on voyages to which the STCW applies. More information on manning requirements and applicability may be found in Title 46 CFR Shipping, Part 15. For more detailed information on manning requirements, you should contact your local U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office or Unit.

8. I already have Rating Forming Part of a Navigational Watch (RFPNW). Am I qualified for an endorsement as AS-D (46 CFR 12.603)?

- You must hold or qualify for any National endorsement as AB.
- You must show at least 12 months of service as RFPNW, this service may be reduced with evidence of Coast Guard-approved training.
- If you hold an endorsement as AB-Unlimited or AB-Limited, you can qualify for AS-D without showing sea service. The AS-D competencies are still required.

See NVIC-14-14 for more details.

9. Do I need to currently hold RFPNW to get an AS-D?

No. You do not need to have the RFPNW endorsed on your Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) to get AS-D, however, you do need to qualify for RFPNW, which requires completion of service and competencies prior to accruing sea service towards AS-D.

10. I already have Rating Forming Part of an Engineering Watch (RFPEW). Am I qualified for an endorsement as AS-E (46 CFR 12.607)?

Maybe. The AS-E is considered a higher endorsement than the RFPEW, however, by itself RFPEW will not qualify you for an AS-E endorsement. In all cases, the AS-E competencies are still required.

- You must hold or qualify for any National endorsement a Qualified Member of the Engine Department (QMED).
- You must show at least 12 months of service as RFPEW, this service may be reduced with evidence of Coast Guard-approved training.
- If you hold a QMED endorsement as Engineman or Deck Engine Mechanic, you can qualify for AS-E without showing sea service.

See NVIC 18-14 for more details.

11. Do I need to currently hold RFPEW to get an AS-E?

No. You do not need to have the RFPEW endorsed on your MMC to get AS-E, however, you do need to qualify for RFPEW, which requires completion of service and competencies prior to accruing sea service towards AS-E.

12. Is there is a scenario where I do not need to qualify for RFPNW or RFPEW to get AS-D or AS-E?

No. See 46 CFR 12.603 and NVIC 14-14 for AS-D for more details. See 46 CFR 12.607 and NVIC 18-18 for AS-E for more details.

13. Are non-watchstanding AB or QMEDs such as pumpman, electricians, or machinists required to hold endorsements for Able Seafarer?

Yes, if they are serving on vessels engaged on voyages to which STCW applies.

14. Is it sufficient for an AB to hold an endorsement for RFPNW or for a QMED to hold RFPEW?

Not Since January 1, 2013. On that date, the 2010 amendments went into effect, which require AB and QMED to hold the appropriate AB endorsement. While RFPNW and RFPEW are required prerequisites for AB, by themselves they are no longer sufficient for mariners serving as AB or QMED on vessels engaged on voyages to which STCW applies.

15. I have an STCW endorsement as [*Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch (OICNW)/Officer in Charge of an Engineering Watch (OICEW)/Chief Mate/Master/Chief Engineer/Second Engineering Officer*] and just submitted it for renewal. Will you automatically add the AS-D or AS-E endorsement or do I need to amend my application?

After January 1, 2017, we will not automatically add the AS-D or AS-E endorsement unless requested on the application and the competencies are submitted.

16. Why isn't ECDIS endorsed?

ECDIS is a part of the STCW required competencies for master, chief mate, and OICNW; it is not itself an endorsement. If you do not have approved ECDIS training, your STCW endorsement(s) for master chief mate, and/or OICNW will have a limitation indicating that it is not valid for vessels with ECDIS.

17. If I had the ECDIS limitation placed on my MMC and I apply to have it removed, does this result in a new MMC book? Or will they reprint an endorsement with my highest officer capacity showing no ECDIS limitation?

You should be issued a new MMC book with the same expiration date. If submitted with an application for renewal you should receive a new MMC book and a new expiration date.

18. I am a 2nd Mate and qualify for unlimited OICNW and have a Master 1,600 Oceans. Why do I have the 3,000 GT tonnage limitation?

This limitation will only apply to your STCW endorsement as Master. Your endorsement for OICNW, which corresponds to your 2nd Mate endorsement, will not have a tonnage limitation.

19. I want to apply for an STCW endorsement for service on tank vessels. How will these policies affect me?

Within this policy, mariners who hold an endorsement for Tankerman-PIC (Barge) qualify for an STCW endorsement for tank vessel service. A mariner who holds or qualifies for an endorsement as Tankerman-PIC (Barge) will qualify for an STCW endorsement for advanced tanker operations with a limitation to vessels that are not self-propelled.

The National endorsement as Tankerman (DL) has two possible corresponding STCW endorsements, Advanced Oil Tanker Cargo Operations and Advanced Chemical Cargo Operations. Each require service on oil or chemical tankers as appropriate.

The wording of the endorsements has changed. All applications for an STCW tank vessel endorsement will be issued with the new wording.

20. I currently have a domestic tankerman endorsement. Will I automatically receive an STCW tankerman endorsement when I apply?

No. See NVIC 22-14 for qualifications to obtain a corresponding STCW endorsement.

21. Did STCW renewal requirements for BT, Proficiency in Survival Craft (PSC), PSC Limited, and Advanced Firefighting change?

Yes, all require evidence of continuing competencies via qualifying service and completion of Coast Guard-approved training. With qualifying service, revalidation training is acceptable. If you have no qualifying service, refresher training must be completed.

- See NVIC 04-14 for Proficiency in Survival Craft
- See NVIC 08-14 for Basic Training
- See NVIC 9-14 for Advanced Firefighting.

22. Do I have to meet the requirements for STCW in order to receive a domestic officer endorsement?

No. The Coast Guard does not require mariners to meet STCW requirements as a prerequisite to receiving National (domestic) officer endorsements.

23. May I use the previous policy letters for STCW as OICNW, Master or Chief Mate 3000 Gross Tons or More, RFPNW, RFPEW, and PSC and Rescue Boats Other than Fast Rescue Boats?

No. All applications for STCW as of January 1, 2017, must meet the requirements of International Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW 1978, as amended). This has been extended for some STCW capacities, check the current applicable NVIC to see if additional extensions have been granted.

24. I applied for an STCW endorsement in the past and my application was not approved because I did not take all of the courses required at the time. My application has now “timed out” or expired. Do I need to re-apply for the STCW endorsement?

Yes. A mariner whose application has “timed out” or who was denied must re-apply by submitting a new application. New requirements in effect as of January 1, 2017, must be met that may require a new record of assessments and updated Coast Guard approved training. [NVIC 03-14 Guidelines for Approval of Training Courses and Programs](#) provides information for the validity period of courses.

25. I previously held an STCW 1978 and would like to apply for an STCW 1978, as amended. What do I need to do?

You must meet the current STCW requirements for the international endorsement sought.