

Frequently Asked Questions: STCW – Policy Letters 12-06 and 12-07

1. What new endorsements are available because of these policy letters?

The new STCW endorsements are:

- Able Seafarer – Deck (AS-D)
- Able Seafarer – Engine (AS-E)
- Vessel Personnel with Designated Security Duties (VPDSD)
- Security Awareness (SA).

A Mariner who has Tankerman-PIC (Barge) will now be eligible for an STCW endorsement consistent with the authority of their domestic endorsement.

2. Am I required to take Basic Safety Training (BST) to get these new endorsements?

BST is not required for Security Awareness or VPDSD. For all other STCW endorsements, valid BSTs are required.

3. 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, 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).

4. 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.

5. 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 VPDS 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.

6. 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 VPDS 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. What does the Able Seafarer-Deck and Able Seafarer-Engine endorsements allow a mariner to do?

Able Seafarer-Deck and Able Seafarer-Engine are the STCW counterparts to the U.S. ratings of Able Seaman and QMED. These STCW endorsements are required by mariners serving as Able Seaman or QMED on vessels that are on voyages to which the STCW applies.

10. I already have RFPNW. Am I qualified for an endorsement as AS-D?

Maybe. The AS-D is considered a higher endorsement than the RFPNW, however, by itself RFPNW will not qualify you for an AS-D endorsement.

- If you do not hold an endorsement as Able Seaman, you must show at least 12 months of service as RFPNW.
- If you hold an endorsement as Able Seaman-Unlimited or Able Seaman-Limited, you can qualify for AS-D without showing sea service.
- If you hold an endorsement as Able Seaman-Special, you must show evidence of at least 6 months of service
- If you hold Able Seaman-OSV, Able Seaman-Sail or Able Seaman-Fishing industry, you must show evidence of at least 12 months of service.

See [Coast Guard Policy Letter 12-07](#) for more details

11. I already have RFPEW. Am I qualified for an endorsement as AS-E?

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.

- If you do not hold an endorsement as QMED, you must show at least 12 months of service as RFPEW.
- If you hold a QMED endorsement as Engineman or Deck Engine Mechanic, you can qualify for AS-E without showing sea service.
- If you hold any other QMED endorsement you must show evidence of at least 6 months of service.

See [Coast Guard Policy Letter 12-07](#) for more details.

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

No.

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

No.

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

No. STCW requires Able Seafarers to qualify for RFPNW or RFPEW. Some mariners who are applying for Able Seafarer but do not currently hold RFPNW or RFPEW may be eligible to be grandfathered in. In such situations both the Able Seafarer and RFPNW or RFPEW will be endorsed on your MMC. See [Coast Guard Policy Letter 12-07](#) for more details.

15. Are non-watchstanding Able Seaman or QMEDs such as pumpmen, electricians, or machinists required to hold endorsements for Able Seafarer?

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

16. Is it sufficient for an Able Seaman to hold an endorsement for Rating Forming Part of a Navigational Watch (RFPNW) or for a QMED to hold Rating Forming Part of an Engineering Watch (RFPEW)?

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

17. I have an STCW endorsement as [OICNW/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?

We will add the AS-D or AS-E endorsement without you having to amend your application. We will automatically review any applications for qualification as AS-D or AS-E and add these endorsements if you are qualified to renew your existing endorsement.

18. Will there be any limitations or restrictions placed on my credential as a result of these policy letters?

All limitations currently on your STCW endorsements will be retained, such as “Not valid for vessels equipped with ARPA,” unless you meet the current requirement. The new policies also provide for a limitation with regard to Electronic Chart Display Information Systems (ECDIS). Effective immediately, any application that is in process for an endorsement as Chief Mate, Master, or OICNW will have a limitation added to their endorsement stating they are not qualified to work on a vessels equipped with ECDIS after December 31, 2016, unless they can show successful completion of a Coast Guard approved or accepted ECDIS course.

19. 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 after December 31, 2016.

20. 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?

In most cases, NMC will issue you the endorsement without the ECDIS limitation to add to your existing MMC book.

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

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

22. 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. There are no other changes to the qualification requirements for a tank vessel endorsement resulting from these policies, however, the wording of the endorsements has changed. All applications for an STCW tank vessel endorsement will be issued with the new wording.

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

Yes, applications will automatically be evaluated for STCW tank vessel endorsements. If you have a valid qualification in BST, you will be issued the STCW tank vessel endorsement.

24. Will the requirements for any of the endorsements discussed in these policy letters change when the STCW Final Rule is published?

Federal law prohibits the Coast Guard from discussing the contents of proposed rulemakings. The policy letters may be cancelled or revised upon publication of the STCW Final Rule. In the event the requirements change, it is likely that reasonable notice and a transition period will be provided.