

The *DRILL DOWN*

by the USCG Outer Continental Shelf National Center of Expertise

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MODU Certificate of Compliance: Option "B" – A Closer Look

Introduction

A previous issue of the Drill Down explored the regulatory compliance options for foreign-flagged Mobile Offshore Drilling Units (MODUs) on the U.S. OCS (see *Drill Down Issue #3-MODU*). While these examination/compliance options are mostly self-explanatory, Option "B" has some intricacies that we will further clarify in this issue.

Option "B" Equivalencies

A Certificate of Compliance (COC), CG-3585, issued under the provisions of 33 CFR 143.207(b) (design & equipment) and/or 33 CFR 146.205(b) (operations), also known as Option "B", allows for compliance with the standards of the MODU's documenting nation, if the standards provide a level of safety generally equivalent to or greater than that provided under 46 CFR Parts 108 and 109. The Coast Guard had previously recognized the national standards of two Administrations, Panama and Marshall Islands, with the addition of a third, Liberia in 2025, as meeting Option B requirements.

Each equivalency discussed includes a reference table showing the parts of the national standards and the Conventions that apply to MODUs examined under Option "B" for the respective Administration.

International Conventions Referenced

Both Panama and Marshall Islands at different times refer out to International Conventions and U.S. Coast Guard regulations, while Liberia refers to International Conventions and Liberian Marine Notices.



Panama

The Republic of Panama's rules for existing MODUs, as listed in *Panama Technical Note 1/83*, were accepted as equivalent to those provided under 46 CFR 108 by Commandant (G-MVI-4) letter dated June 9, 1986. This

equivalency was granted for existing MODUs that could not comply with the IMO MODU Code (1979). Important factors regarding Panama's equivalency:

- Applies only to MODUs built, under construction or contracted **prior to April 5, 1982**;
- The MODUs must hold a valid Panamanian MODU Safety Certificate issued under *Technical Note 1/83*;
- Exceptions are noted in Enclosure (1) to the acceptance letter and denote specific design & equipment

requirements that must be complied with, in addition to *Tech Note 1-83*; and

- The equivalency only applies to 46 CFR Part 108 (design & equipment) and **NOT** to 46 CFR Part 109 for operational requirements; therefore, they must meet the requirements of 46 CFR 109 that were in effect according to the MODU build date.

Panama Technical Note 1/83 is broken down into **three parts**, as follows:

- *Part "A"*, which applies to all Panama flagged MODUs, provides Panama's interpretation of certain sections of the 1979 MODU Code;
- *Part "B"*, which applies to existing Panama flagged MODUs and elaborates on the general principles which shall be used to establish the suitability of an existing Panama MODU to conduct international operations; and
- *"Requirements for Existing Panamanian Flag MODUs for Issuance of a USCG Letter of Compliance under 33 CFR 143.207(b)"* that provides additional requirements for the USCG to issue the Letter of Compliance (superseded by a Certificate of Compliance that is currently issued).

Panama Reference Table:

Panama Technical Note 1/83		International Convention/ USCG Reg
Part B	5.1	International Convention on Load Lines
	6.2 (Self-Propelled Only)	SOLAS 74
	9.2 – 9.3	SOLAS 74
	1	MODU Code (1979)
	7.2.1 – 7.2.3	MODU Code (1979)
	7.5	MODU Code (1979)
	8.5	MODU Code (1979)
	9.6	MODU Code (1979)
	10	MODU Code (1979)
	12.1	MODU Code (1979)
Additional USCG Requirements	4	33 CFR 146.205 46 CFR 108.301
	5	46 CFR 108.170 - .177
	6	46 CFR 108.123 & .127
	7	46 CFR 108.486 thru .496 & .653
	8	SOLAS 74 or 46 CFR 160.035
	9	Lifeboats: 46 CFR 108.503 or SOLAS 74; Liferafts: 46 CFR 108.505 or SOLAS 74
	11	46 CFR 108.505 & 33 CFR 144.30



Marshall Islands

The Republic of the Marshall Islands' Mobile Offshore Drilling Units Standards, *Publication MI-293* (Rev. 8/00) was accepted as equivalent to both 46 CFR Parts 108 and 109 by Commandant (G-MOC) letter dated August 9, 2002. Like the earlier

equivalency granted to Panama, Option "B" for Marshall Islands flagged MODUs only applies to units that were constructed prior to the implementation of the IMO MODU Code (1979). Important factors regarding Marshall Islands' equivalency:

- Applies to MODUs constructed **before December 31, 1981**, for Option "B"; Part I of *MI-293* defines these MODUs as existing units.
- MODUs constructed on or after December 31, 1981, and issued a Marshall Islands MODU Safety Certificate under the provisions of *MI-293* are considered to be in compliance with Option "C" and are issued a COC for the same.
- Units must also meet the requirements of Enclosure (1) to the acceptance letter, "Supplement for Marshall Islands Flagged MODUs".
- Unlike Panama, the equivalency applies to 46 CFR 108 (design & equipment) and 46 CFR 109 (operations).
- *MI-293*, Rev. 8/00 is the accepted publication; later revisions of the publication have not been reviewed or accepted by the Coast Guard.

Marshall Island's *MI-293* (Rev. 8/00) is broken down into **six parts**, as follows:

- *Part I*: General Requirements
- *Part II*: Definitions
- *Part III*: Applies to units meeting the 1989 MODU Code, as modified by the Interpretations of the MI administration in *MI-293* and constructed on or after May 1, 1991. Compliant units are issued an International Mobile Drilling Unit Safety Certificate (1989).
- *Part IV*: Applies to units meeting the 1979 MODU Code, as modified by the interpretations of the MI Administration in *MI-293* and constructed on or after December 31, 1981, and prior to May 1, 1991. Compliant units are issued an International Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit Safety Certificate (1979).
- *Part V*: Applies to units not meeting the 1979 or 1989 MODU Codes but do comply with the national requirements as outlined in this part. These units that are constructed prior to December 31, 1981, are issued an MI National Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit Document of Compliance.
- *Part VI*: Applies to all MI MODUs, regardless of which previous part applies. It lists the additional requirements for the issuance of the USCG Letter of Compliance (superseded by the Certificate of Compliance that is currently issued).

Marshall Islands Reference Table:

Marshall Islands Publication 293 (Rev. 8/00)		International Convention/USCG Reg
Part III	H	74 SOLAS
	M	74 SOLAS
	N (Non-Self-Propelled Only)	74 SOLAS
Part IV	H	74 SOLAS
	I	74 SOLAS & 1989 MODU Code
	M	74 SOLAS
	N	74 SOLAS
Part V	C.2	MODU Code (1979)
	C.3	International Convention on Load Lines (ICLL)
	D.1 (Self-Propelled)	74 SOLAS
	E.1	MODU Code (1979)
	E.3	MODU Code (1979)
	F.1	MODU Code (1979)
	F.7	MODU Code (1979)
	G.3	74 SOLAS & 1989 MODU Code
	G.4	MODU Code (1979)
	G.7	MODU Code (1979)
	J	MODU Code (1979)
	L	74 SOLAS
	M	74 SOLAS
Part VI (All MODUs)	A.2	NVIC 3-88, CH-1
	A.3	1979 or 1989 MODU Code
	A.4	MARPOL & ICLL
	A.5	1979 or 1989 MODU Code
	A.6	1989 MODU Code
	A.7	33 CFR Parts 130 & 135 & 40 CFR 125.120
	A.8	33 CFR Part 142
	A.9	33 CFR 146.120
	B.1	33 CFR Subchapter N
	B.2	33 CFR Subchapter O
	B.3	33 CFR Part 164
	B.4	46 CFR 61.10 & MOC Policy Letter 01/03
	B.5	46 CFR 108.503
	B.6	46 CFR 109.301
	B.7	46 CFR 109.223
	B.8	46 CFR 108.209 or .210 & 46 CFR 108.707 & .709
	B.9	46 CFR 111.60 & .105

Liberia



Office of the
Deputy Commissioner of
Maritime Affairs

The Republic of Liberia's Mobile Offshore Unit Standards *RLM-293* (Rev. 05/25) was accepted as equivalent to both 46 CFR Parts 108 and 109 by Commandant (CG-ENG) letter dated July 24, 2025. Like previously accepted equivalencies, it only applies to units that were constructed prior to the implementation of the IMO MODU Code (1979). Important factors regarding

Liberia's equivalency:

- Applies to MODUs constructed **before December 31, 1981**.
- Does **NOT** apply to self-propelled MODUs.

- Units must also meet the requirements found in paragraph 3 of the approval letter.

Liberia's *RLM-293* is broken into **six chapters**, as follows:

- *Chapter I*: applies to all Liberian flagged MOUs;
- *Chapter II*: Requirements for Mobile Offshore Drilling Units that do Not Meet the 1979, 1989, or 2009 MODU Code;
- *Chapter III*: Requirements for Compliance with the 1979 MODU Code;
- *Chapter IV*: Requirements for Compliance with the 1989 MODU Code;
- *Chapter V*: Requirements for Compliance with the 2009 MODU Code; and
- *Chapter VI*: Requirements for Mobile Offshore Units.

RLM-293 refers to Liberian Marine Notices (LMNs). These LMNs provide guidance from Liberia on the topic of the notice. See table for the LMNs referenced in the acceptance.

Liberian Marine Notice (LMN) Table:

LMN	Rev. Date	Title
FIR-001	07/24	Fire-Protection Systems & Appliances
FIR-002	07/20	Fire Extinguishing Requirements for Flammable Liquid Lockers Including Paint Lockers
INS-001	09/24	Safety Inspections of Liberian Ships
INS-002	07/20	Alternate Safety Inspection Program
ISM-001	07/24	International Safety Management Code (ISM) & SOLAS 74 Chapter IX, Management for the Safe Operation of Ships
ISP-001	10/21	International Ship & Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code)
MAN-004	07/20	Manning Requirements for Mobile Offshore Units (MOUs)
RAD-001	07/20	Required Documents for Ship Radio Stations
RAD-002	06/24	Renewal of Ship Radio Station Licenses
SAF-001	07/20	Lifesaving Equipment
SAF-004	10/24	Lifeboat & Emergency Drills
SAF-005	07/20	Survival Craft, Rescue Boat & Launching Appliances – Testing, Servicing, and Maintenance
SAF-006	07/20	Lifesaving Equipment – Lifejackets
SAF-007	07/20	Lifesaving Equipment – Immersion Suits & Thermal Protective Aids

Liberia Reference Table:

RLM-293 (05/25)		International Convention/LMN
Chapter 1, Section III	3.1	MARPOL 73/78
	3.2	International Convention on Load Lines (ICLL) (1966)
	3.3	International Convention on Tonnage Measurements of Ships (1969)
	3.4	International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972
	3.7	International Convention for the Control and Management and Management of Ship's Ballast Water and Sediments
	3.7.1	IMO Circular BWN.2/Circ.52/Rev.1
	3.8	Fire Safety Systems Code
	3.8	Lifesaving Appliance Code

Chapter 1, Sect. VI	6.6	SOLAS Chapter IV/LMNs RAD-001, RAD-002
Chapter 1, Sect. VIII	8.3	LMN INS-001/LMN INS-002
Chapter 1, Sect. XI	9.0	International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 92
	9.0	ILO Convention 133
	9.6	3 rd Ed. of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Medical Guide for Ships and Quantification Addendum
Chapter 1, Section X	10.1-10.3	LMN MAN-004
Chapter 1, Sect. XI	11.1-11.4	2009 MODU Code
	11.5	IMO Code of Safety for Diving Systems
	11.6	2009 MODU Code
	11.6.1	MODU Code (1979)/LMN SAF-004
	11.7	2009 MODU Code
Chapter 2, Sect. II	2.1.1	MODU Code (1979)
	2.1.3	
	2.3.3	1989 MODU Code
Chapter 2, Sect. III	3.1.1, .2 & .4	MODU Code (1979)
	3.4	
	3.5.3	
	3.6-3.7	
Chapter 2, Sect. IV	4.2	IMO Code of Safety for Diving Systems
Chapter 2, Sect. V	5.1 & 5.5	MODU Code (1979)
Chapter 2, Sect. VII	7.2	
	7.6-7.10	
	7.12	
	7.14	
Chapter 2, Sect. VIII	8.4	MODU Code (1979)
	8.6	1989 MODU Code
	8.7	MODU Code (1979)/LSA Code
	8.8	SOLAS (1974)
	8.12	LMN SAF-001
	8.14-8.16	LSA Code
	8.17	LMN SAF-001/LMN SAF-005/LMN SAF-006/LMN SAF-007
	8.19	MODU Code (1979)
Chapter 2, Sect. IX	9.1	2009 MODU Code/Resolution
	9.6	MSC.506(105)
Chapter 2, Sect. XII	12.2	ICLL (1966)
Chapter 2, Sect. XIII	13.1	MODU Code (1979)
	13.2	1989 or 2009 MODU Code

Conclusion

Although there are large time lapses between these three equivalency acceptances, it is crucial to note that all standards are only accepted for MODUs that were pre-existing, or under construction, prior to the implementation of the IMO MODU Code (1979). Implementation dates are set by the respective Administrations but all MODUs built after the dates listed in the approval letters will be examined and have a COC issued as either Option "A" or Option "C" (see *Drill Down Issue #3-MODU* for further explanation of these two options).