

M-Notices – November 2009

MIN 352 (M) — Code of safe working practices for merchant seamen: issue of Amendment 09

This note alerts seafarers to the recent publication of an amendment to the Code of safe working practices for merchant seamen. Amendment 9 deals particularly with safe movement during heavy weather.

Shipowners and masters are reminded of the regulations requiring copies of the Code to be easily accessible onboard. Electronic copies may be used, but at least one print copy should be available.

MIN 358 (M+F) — Information on Class ‘D’ VHF radios

Class D VHF Digital Selective Calling (DSC) radios are intended for use on smaller vessels, particularly leisure craft. They must comply with equipment standards known internationally as IEC 62238 and in Europe as EN 301 025, which specify that Class D VHF must have the following features:

- Distress
- all ships urgency/safety
- individual routine
- group routine

It has come to the MCA’s attention that some of the radios on the market do not meet the international/EU standards because they have too many additional features. Their complexity may make them difficult to operate without special training. Functionality should be limited to the DSC uses defined in the standards above, and users should check this before purchase.

Internet purchasers dealing with suppliers outside the UK should note that their transaction deems them the ‘importer’, and they may risk legal sanctions if the equipment does not conform to the relevant standards.

MIN 359 (M) — Safety data sheets: adoption of amendments to chapter VI of Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) 1974, as amended

Under new SOLAS regulations, it has become mandatory for ships carrying MARPOL Annex 1 products (e.g. marine fuel oil) to carry a material safety data sheet. This must be provided to the vessel prior to the loading of the relevant cargoes or fuel oils. The format of the data sheet can be found in MARPOL Annex 1 — MSC.286(86).

MIN 362 (M+F) — Change of MCA distribution agent for M-Notices

As of 1 October 2009, the distributor for M-Notice subscriptions is EC Group of Grays, Essex. Subscriptions taken out with the previous distribution agent before this date will run as normal until 31 March 2010 but will be administered by EC Group. Details of how to contact EC Group are given at the end of this section.

MGN 399 (M) Prevention of infectious disease at sea by immunisations and anti-malaria medication (prophylaxis)

This note explains which immunisations are needed for travel to particular parts of the world, and whose responsibility it is to ensure that seafarers have this protection. It also deals in detail with the issue of prophylactic (preventive) medication for malaria, a disease for which there is no inoculation yet available.

Seafarers are reminded that good hygiene and bite avoidance are major factors in the fight against infectious diseases, but it is also crucial to make sure immunisations are up to date. It is the maritime employer's responsibility to provide and pay for preventive measures such as immunisations, and the seafarer's responsibility to comply with these measures.

Before a crew member is appointed to a ship, the employer — including the agency or ship management company which formally employs the seafarer — needs to know where each person will be travelling to and the risks of infection in these places. They should check the immunisation status of the seafarer and insure any missing inoculations are given. For crews travelling to areas affected by malaria, the employer must supply items such as mosquito nets and insect repellent sprays as well as prophylactic medication.

Employers should inform MCA approved doctors of crew members' likely destinations so that routine medical checks can include immunisations and advice on disease prevention. It is important to take medical advice before starting anti-malaria medication, as some drugs are unsuitable for people with particular health conditions. Where manning agencies are recruiting without adequate briefing on destinations, immunisation and malaria prevention is the ship operator's responsibility, even if the operator is not the direct employer of the crew.

Seafarers should retain a record of their own immunisations and any drug side effects they have experienced and present this to the approved doctor at medicals, and when requested by employers. They should also be aware of the importance of reporting symptoms such as a flu-like illness, fever or diarrhoea. The seafarer's record should be checked before departure by the ship's operator and finally by the master. Annexes to MGN 399 contain information on organisations to contact for further advice, as well as a list of immunisations recommended for travel to particular parts of the world, a schedule of immunisations, an overview of the various anti-malaria drugs and a note of medication which can be taken if malaria is contracted.