



**The Bahamas  
Maritime Authority**



# **Technical Procedures for Registration**

A guide to the technical requirements for registration of ships in The Bahamas.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document has been produced by the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) to provide owners, managers and their representatives with a description of the route to technical acceptance of a ship<sup>1</sup> to the Bahamas Register. Readers should also consult BMA Information Bulletins and the Bahamas National Requirements which are available on the BMA website ([www.bahamasmaritime.com](http://www.bahamasmaritime.com)).
- 1.2. Registration of ships is processed by the Registrars in the London, Nassau, New York, Hong Kong or Piraeus offices of the BMA. Initial approaches for registration may be made through the appropriate BMA office or through the BMA Agents (not BMA approved Nautical Inspectors) in Germany or Japan. The BMA Inspections & Surveys department supports the Registrars in ensuring that ships and managers are technically acceptable for the Bahamas register.
- 1.3. The information required by the Registrar must be submitted on the BMA forms which are found on the BMA website. This information will be used by the Inspections & Surveys department in the technical review process.

## 2. General technical requirements for ship registration

### 2.1. General

- 2.1.1. The Bahamas Register is primarily for commercial ships of above 1600 NT that are intended to trade internationally and private & charter yachts over 12 metres load line length.
- 2.1.2. The technical requirements for Bahamian ships are the applicable international Conventions of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), etc., together with amendments and mandatory resolutions that have been adopted by such organisations, and which have been enacted through the Bahamas Merchant Shipping Act, as amended.
- 2.1.3. All ships are to have their relevant statutory certificates issued by one of the classification societies that have been authorised as a Bahamas Recognised Organisation (RO) and/or a Bahamas Recognised Security Organisation (RSO) as listed in BMA Information Bulletin No.3.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "ship" for the purpose of this document refers to any vessel or structure to be registered, including offshore units.

- 2.1.4. Fishing vessels, including fish factory/processing ships, are not accepted for registration.
- 2.1.5. Refrigerated cargo ships engaged in the transportation and/or transshipment of fisheries products are required to be in possession of the appropriate permissions/licences from the relevant coastal State(s) for the voyages concerned. The BMA cooperates fully with coastal State investigations into allegations of involvement in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and associated activities.
- 2.1.6. The BMA can, on request, undertake inspections of refrigerated cargo ships as required under European Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of 29 April 2004 and Regulation (EC) No 285/2004 of 29 April 2004. Further information may be obtained on request by emailing [tech@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:tech@bahamasmaritime.com).
- 2.1.7. "Single hull" tankers subject to MARPOL Annex I, Regulation 20 are not accepted for registration except where they are to be converted to other vessel types (e.g. Bulk Carrier, FPSO, etc.) and are not permitted to trade as tankers after registration.
- 2.1.8. Special requirements and procedures apply to charter and private motor and sailing yachts. Details are available in BMA Information Bulletin Nos. 102 and 133 which may be downloaded from the BMA website.
- 2.1.9. All masters, officers and radio operators must be provided with a Bahamas endorsement to their national certificate. Procedures and application forms are available on the BMA website and are processed by the BMA Seafarers & Manning department. Questions on manning and certification matters may be directed to the relevant department at [stcw@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:stcw@bahamasmaritime.com).
- 2.1.10. In accordance with paragraph 3.1 of the ISM Code, the owner must formally notify the BMA of the name and contact details of the Company that is to undertake and be responsible for the operation of the ship. The BMA will acknowledge such notifications.
- 2.1.11. In accordance with paragraph 3.1 of the ISM Code, the Company must formally notify the BMA of the name and contact details of the Designated Person Ashore (DPA) for each Bahamian ship under their management. The BMA will acknowledge such notifications.
- 2.1.12. In accordance with paragraph 11.1 of the ISPS Code, the Company must notify the BMA of the designated Company Security Officer. The BMA will acknowledge such notifications.

2.1.13. In accordance with STCW Regulation I/14, the Company must notify the BMA of the entity responsible for crewing of its ships.

2.1.14. The 'Company' must hold an ISM Code Document of Compliance that includes the type(s) of ship proposed for registration. Such a DOC must be issued by one of the Bahamas ROs or, in some circumstances, another Administration on behalf of The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. Please refer to BMA Information Bulletin No. 23.

2.1.15. Applications for the following documents are processed by the BMA:

- Long Range Identification & Tracking (LRIT) Conformance Test Report;
- Continuous Synopsis Record;
- Minimum Safe Manning Document;
- Civil Liability Certificate;
- Bunker CLC;
- Radio Licence;
- MARPOL 73/78 Condition Assessment Scheme Statement of Compliance;
- Declaration of Maritime Labour Compliance Part I;
- Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006) Statement of Interpretation;
- MLC 2006 Exemptions/Equivalence;
- Permit to Operate High Speed Craft or Dynamically Supported Craft.

## **2.2. New Buildings**

2.2.1. When the owner of a new building ship intends to enter it onto the Bahamas register, it is strongly recommended that the BMA is informed at the earliest opportunity. This is particularly important if any exemptions from, or equivalences to, international Conventions are proposed. Any applications for exemptions or equivalent arrangements are to be made by the RO in accordance with BMA Information Bulletin No.8.

2.2.2. The completed application forms required by the Registrar are to be submitted by the intended owner or their representative to the BMA at the earliest opportunity.

2.2.3. A copy of the International Tonnage Certificate and Certificate of Survey are to be submitted to the Registrar at the earliest opportunity.

2.2.4. The Inspections & Surveys department will review this information to determine the ship's suitability for provisional registration and to identify and resolve potential problem areas in meeting statutory certification requirements.

### **2.3. Ships up to 12 years of age**

2.3.1. When an owner, manager or other representative considers registering an existing ship in The Bahamas, the information referenced in 2.2 above is to be submitted to the BMA, via the relevant Registrar, at the earliest opportunity.

2.3.2. A copy of the International Tonnage Certificate and Certificate of Survey (or Certificate of Registry) are to be submitted to the Registrar at the earliest opportunity

2.3.3. A current (not older than 90 days) Classification Society Listing of Surveys and Conditions of Class or Class Status Report is to be provided to the Inspections & Surveys department via the BMA Registrar.

2.3.4. In addition, full copies of the existing statutory certificates together with copies of any associated exemption certificates, statements of equivalency and list of limitations that the current Administration has approved are to be provided to the Inspections & Surveys department via the BMA Registrar. A list of the documents that should be provided is shown in Appendix 1.

2.3.5. The Inspections & Surveys department will review the above information as part of the process of assessing the ship's technical suitability for provisional registration. The Registrar will not proceed with provisional registration until the Inspections & Surveys department has positively recommended the technical suitability of the ship.

### **2.4. Ships 12-20 years of age**

2.4.1. In addition to the above documentation review, ships over 12 years of age require a satisfactory 'pre-registration inspection' to be carried out by a Bahamas Approved Nautical

Inspector. Contact details of these inspectors are available on the BMA website.

- 2.4.2. The Company must contact the inspector directly to make the necessary arrangements for their attendance. The Inspections & Surveys department should be copied into correspondence to ensure that any special instructions are properly communicated.
- 2.4.3. There is no standard charge for an inspection, and payment must be agreed between the inspector and the Company requesting the inspection. It is strongly recommended that inspection arrangements are not finalised until the BMA has had adequate opportunity to complete the document review.
- 2.4.4. The purpose of the pre-registration inspection is to assess the overall technical condition of the ship. The inspector will require safe access to a representative sample of holds, ballast tanks and to all other areas. Pre-registration inspections are to be scheduled for daylight hours only.
- 2.4.5. The inspector will prepare a report using the BMA standard format that will list any identified deficiencies. The report is sent to the BMA Inspections & Surveys department with a copy for the Company. The BMA will review this report and communicate with the proposed managers to resolve any technical concerns and determine the ship's technical suitability for provisional registration.
- 2.4.6. It is usual that major deficiencies identified will need to be dealt with before provisional registration may proceed. For minor deficiencies, the supply of a plan for corrective action may be sufficient.
- 2.4.7. Following resolution of any deficiencies, the BMA Inspections & Surveys department will advise the Registrar, who will complete provisional registration procedures.

## **2.5. Ships over 20 years of age**

- 2.5.1. Ships of 20 years of age or more are not normally accepted for registration in The Bahamas. However, certain vessels in this category may be accepted, subject to additional procedures and criteria.
- 2.5.2. In addition to the documentation review and pre-registration inspection as specified in 2.3 and 2.4 above, ships over 20 years of age are subject to additional acceptance criteria:

- a) Vessel must have been maintained to a high standard throughout its life and must be in good condition in all respects.
- b) Vessel must have a good Class and Flag history.
- c) Vessel must be fully compliant with relevant international Conventions.
- d) Vessel must have a good Port State Control record.
- e) Vessel must be considered to have a useful trading life remaining.
- f) Proposed managers should have a pre-existing relationship with the BMA and a satisfactory performance.

### 3. Change of Flag issues

- 3.1. For an existing ship, at the time of the change of flag the ship must be marked with its new official number and port of registry, together with any change of name and tonnages as applicable. Lifeboats and lifebuoys are also to be suitably marked. If the vessel is at sea at the time of the change of flag, the marking must be carried out before leaving the next port.
- 3.2. For both new and existing ships, the Company may engage a Bahamas Inspector to attend the ship at this time to verify and endorse the ship's Carving & Marking Note. However, this may be done at any time during provisional registration, including at the initial inspection.
- 3.3. Prior to the change of flag, the Company is to apply to the BMA for a Document of Maritime Labour Compliance (DMLC) Part I, for its ships to which the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006, applies. Please refer to BMA Information Bulletin No. 127.

The following documents should be provided when applying for a DMLC Part I:

*3.3.1. For ships transferring from a flag State that HAS ratified MLC 2006:*

- Copy of Maritime Labour Certificate and DMLC Part I from current flag State;
- Details of any MLC 2006 exemptions, equivalents, etc. from current flag State;
- **For ships with keel laying date prior to 20 August 2013** - copy of Statement of Compliance with ILO92 and/or ILO133, or full details of any other crew accommodation standards used, including current exemptions.

*3.3.2. For ships transferring from a flag State that HAS NOT ratified MLC 2006:*

- Copy of Statement of Compliance with MLC 2006, ILO92 and/or ILO133, or full details of any other crew accommodation standards used, including current exemptions.
- 3.4. At the change of flag, the Company is to ensure that Recognised Organisation surveyor(s) (and RSO/RO auditor(s)) attend on board to carry out surveys/audits/MLC inspections to verify that the ship meets the statutory requirements and issue appropriate certification on behalf of The Bahamas. The attending surveyor is also to endorse manuals, booklets, plans and documents, as applicable, to denote that they have been approved on behalf of The Bahamas.
- 3.5. The Company is also to arrange the attendance of a radio technician to re-program the MMSI number into the GMDSS equipment and EPIRB.
- 3.6. The Company is to arrange for the LRIT system to be tested by a Bahamas Authorised Testing Application Service Provider (ASP), as per BMA Information Bulletin No. 111. A list of Bahamas Authorised Testing ASPs is provided in BMA Information Bulletin No.116.
- 3.7. It should be noted that the Bahamas Merchant Shipping Act requires all correspondence, forms, and documents to be in the English language. Similarly, all written signs on board a ship must be in English. If a different working language is used on board, a version of the document or sign in that working language may be appended to the English version.
- 3.8. As any newly registered Category 2 and 3 ("single hull") tankers are not permitted to trade as tankers after registration with The Bahamas, a Condition Assessment Scheme "Statement of Compliance" will not be re-issued by the BMA based on a similar statement issued by the previous Administration.

#### **4. Provisional Registration**

- 4.1. When the ship has been technically approved for provisional registration, the BMA Registration Department will complete the process by communicating with the owner's representative. At the point of provisional registration the Registrar will issue the following documents, to be carried on board:
- Provisional Certificate of Registry (six months validity)
  - Ship Radio Communication License
  - Minimum Safe Manning Document<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Issued by Seafarers and Manning department



- Carving and Marking Note
- Continuous Synopsis Record (CSR)
- CLC and Bunker CLC, as applicable
- Declaration of Maritime Labour Compliance Part I<sup>3</sup>
- LRIT Conformance Test Report<sup>3</sup>
- The Complete Merchant Shipping Legislation of the Bahamas\*
- Articles of Agreement\*
- Casualty Report Forms\*
- Certificate of Discharge (pad of 50)\*
- Report of Conduct Certificate (pad of 50)\*
- Record Books required under the relevant Conventions\*
- GMDSS Radio Log Book\*
- Official Log Book, Part I, all ships\*
- Official Log Book, Part II passenger ships only\*

\* - Additional copies of these publications are available from the BMA and application may be directed to the relevant BMA department, [publications@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:publications@bahamasmaritime.com).

4.2. It is recommended that companies operating Bahamian ships obtain a current copy of "The Complete Merchant Shipping Legislation of the Bahamas" for the use of their shore based technical personnel.

4.3. BMA Information Bulletins and the Bahamas National Requirements are available on the BMA web site and are to be carried on board each ship in a Flag State File, either in hard copy or electronically.

4.4. It is strongly recommended that copies of all relevant IMO and ILO conventions, protocols, resolutions, codes, guidelines, notes and circulars, applicable to the type and size of ship and its date of build, are carried on board.

4.5. When a High Speed Craft is accepted for provisional registration, the BMA will, at the specific request of the Company, commence procedures for the issue of a "Permit to Operate".

## **5. Permanent Registration**

5.1. To achieve permanent registration, the Company must, *inter-alia*, within the period of validity of the Provisional Certificate of Registry<sup>4</sup>, arrange for a Bahamas approved inspector to visit the ship to:

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<sup>3</sup> Issued by Inspections and Surveys department

<sup>4</sup> The BMA recommends that the initial inspection is carried out mid way through the six month period of provisional registration.

- **verify that the carving and marking has been correctly carried out (see paragraph 6), and**
- **carry out the Initial Inspection (see paragraph 7)**

5.2. It is the responsibility of the Company to arrange the initial inspection directly with a Bahamas approved inspector. Fees and payment arrangements are to be agreed between the inspector and the Company.

## **6. Carving & Marking**

- 6.1. The original Carving and Marking Note must be available on board for the inspector to endorse when the verification of the marks has been completed. The original note must then be forwarded to the Registrar in the office at which the registration took place.
- 6.2. The requirements for Carving and Marking are detailed in the Bahamas Merchant Shipping Act Ch 268 Section 9 and SOLAS XI-1 Regulation 3.
- 6.3. Permanent marking of the ship requires that all lettering be in the form of raised plate letters welded to the hull, bead weld outline, or centre-punched outline (punch marks should be evenly spaced at minimum 50-75mm intervals).
- 6.4. Where operational conditions do not allow welding to take place the marking may, with the agreement of the BMA, be painted onto the hull and made permanent at the first opportunity.
- 6.5. Special arrangements may be permitted by the Registrar for marking of yachts.

## **7. Initial Inspection**

- 7.1. The Initial Inspection is a wider inspection than the aforementioned pre-registration inspection and is the first of the annual Bahamas inspections. It covers operational issues including manning, training and management, compliance with international and Bahamian national requirements, and the condition of the vessel.
- 7.2. The Inspector will verify any corrective action carried out by the Company for any deficiencies identified during the pre-registration inspection, if applicable.

- 7.3. The Inspector will report the findings of the inspection to the BMA, listing any identified deficiencies. The Inspector is responsible for leaving a copy of the deficiencies on board.
- 7.4. If the ship is found in satisfactory condition, the Inspector will issue a "Certificate of Inspection", which reflects the Anniversary Date assigned by the BMA Inspections & Surveys department. Please refer to BMA Information Bulletin No. 66.
- 7.5. If any major deficiencies are identified, the Certificate of Inspection will not be issued and re-inspection will be required to verify that the Company's corrective action was performed and is adequate to prevent recurrence of major deficiencies. Corrective action in respect of major deficiencies is to be carried out before permanent registration may proceed.
- 7.6. In all cases the Company must advise the Inspections & Surveys department on corrective actions taken, or planned, to deal with the reported deficiencies and their causes.
- 7.7. The report is reviewed by the Inspections & Surveys department to determine the ship's technical suitability for permanent registration. If no deficiencies are found, or if only minor deficiencies are found that can be cleared by the Company submitting documentary evidence, the Inspections & Surveys department will generally advise the Registrar that permanent registration may be progressed.

## **8. Maintaining Registration**

- 8.1. In the event of a change of ship's name, an application must be made to the Registrar, who will verify availability of the proposed new name and produce a Carving and Marking Note. The Company is responsible for arranging verification of the change of name and endorsement of the Carving and Marking Note as detailed in paragraph 6 above.
- 8.2. If the change of name takes place in a location where a Bahamas inspector is not available, the Registrar may authorise a named Classification Society surveyor to endorse the Carving and Marking Note. The Company is to advise the Registrar of the name of the surveyor.
- 8.3. It is a condition of registration that the Company or Owner informs the BMA of any changes in the Company, Designated Person Ashore (DPA) and/or Company Security Officer (CSO) or any contact details for these individuals or organisations by submitting an amended R104 form to the Registrar.

- 8.4. Changes in ownership or technical management will attract a technical review of the ship to confirm that it remains suitable for the Bahamas register.
- 8.5. The BMA Inspections & Surveys department is to be advised of any changes to the ship or its operation. Examples are when a ship:
- changes Classification Society, or;
  - is taken out of service and placed in lay-up, with or without its classification being suspended, or;
  - which is a high-speed/dynamically supported craft, is to be re-located and is to undertake a transit voyage (notification must be made prior to undertaking such a voyage), or;
  - has been, or is to be, modified in such a way that its tonnage is/will be changed<sup>5</sup>, or;
  - is converted to perform functions other than what it was originally designed to perform, especially where there is a change in the manning involving the carriage of more than 12 persons onboard who are not crew.
- 8.6. The BMA Seafarers & Manning department is to be notified of any changes affecting the manning of the ship with respect to the Safe Manning Document.
- 8.7. The BMA LRIT department is to be notified of any changes affecting a ship's LRIT equipment or conformance in accordance with BMA Information Bulletin No. 111.
- 8.8. The BMA Casualty & Investigations department is to be notified of any casualty or incident on a ship in accordance with BMA Information Bulletin No. 4.

## **9. Annual Inspections**

- 9.1. The Bahamas Maritime Authority has a regime of annual inspections of all ships. Further details are available in BMA Information Bulletin No. 66.
- 9.2. Owners and managers are advised that the BMA places great importance on ships being inspected within the due time period and failure to arrange such inspections is regarded as an ISM non-conformity.
- 9.3. Managers are fully responsible for ensuring that an Inspector is provided with safe access to parts of the vessel that require to be inspected.

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<sup>5</sup> The Registrar is to be supplied with a copy of the International Tonnage Certificate.

## 10. BMA Contact Email Addresses

- Registration department [reg@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:reg@bahamasmaritime.com)
- New York Office [newyork@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:newyork@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Nassau Office [Nassau@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:Nassau@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Hong Kong office [hongkong@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:hongkong@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Piraeus office [Greece@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:Greece@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Inspections & Surveys department  
[tech@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:tech@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Seafarers & Manning department  
[stcw@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:stcw@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Casualty & investigations department  
[casualty@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:casualty@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Publications [publications@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:publications@bahamasmaritime.com)
- LRIT department [lrit@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:lrit@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Maritime Affairs [ma@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:ma@bahamasmaritime.com)
- Yachts [yachts@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:yachts@bahamasmaritime.com)

## 11. Revision Record

Rev.6 (30 May 2014) – Renamed "*Technical Procedures for Registration*", complete revision

## Appendix 1

Copies of the following statutory certificates are required for review prior to provisional registration of an existing ship:

### **ALL SHIPS (as applicable)**

- Classification Certificate;
- International Tonnage Certificate;
- International Load Line Certificate and details of any existing exemptions;
- Minimum Safe Manning Document;
- International Oil Pollution Prevention Certificate and details of any existing exemptions;
- International Sewage Pollution prevention Certificate;
- International Air Pollution Prevention Certificate and details of any existing exemptions;
- International Energy Efficiency Certificate;
- ISM Code Document of Compliance (DOC) and Safety Management Certificate (SMC);
- LRIT Conformance Test Report.

### **PASSENGER SHIPS**

- Passenger Ship Safety Certificate and details of any existing exemptions; AND
- List of operational limitations (passenger ships).

### **CARGO SHIPS (as applicable)**

- Cargo Ship Safety Construction certificate and details of any existing exemptions;
- Cargo Ship Safety Equipment Certificate and details of any existing exemptions;
- Cargo Ship Safety Radio Certificate and details of any existing exemptions;
- Cargo Ship Safety Certificate and details of any existing exemptions;
- Document of Compliance for ships carrying dangerous goods;
- Document of authorisation for the carriage of grain;
- International Pollution Prevention Certificate for the carriage of Noxious Liquid Substances in Bulk (NLS Certificate);
- International / Certificate of Fitness for the carriage of Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk;
- International / Certificate of Fitness for the Carriage of Liquefied Gasses in Bulk;
- International Certificate of Fitness for the Carriage of INF Cargo;
- Caribbean Cargo Ship Safety Certificate.

### **HIGH SPEED CRAFT / DYNAMICALLY SUPPORTED CRAFT**

- High Speed Craft Safety Certificate (HSC Certificate); and
- Permit to Operate High-Speed Craft.

OR:

- Dynamically Supported Craft Construction and Equipment Certificate (DSC Certificate); and
- Permit to Operate a Dynamically Supported Craft.

**OFFSHORE SHIPS/UNITS (as applicable)**

- Special Purpose Ships Safety Certificate;
- Certificate of Fitness for Offshore Support Vessels;
- Diving System Safety Certificate;
- Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit Safety Certificate.

**YACHTS (as applicable)**

- Commercial Yacht Code Certificate