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## Manned Submersible Craft

Notice to ship owners, managers, Masters, Approved Nautical Inspectors, Recognised Organisations and surveyors

*This Notice supersedes BMA Information Bulletin No.159*

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### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Marine Notice outlines The Bahamas requirements for the registration, design, construction, survey, certification, and operation of manned submersible craft.
- 1.2. Notwithstanding the requirements of this Notice, it is the responsibility of the owner or operator of manned submersible craft to establish and comply with any requirements which are applicable to the craft when operating in the territorial waters of another State.

### 2. Application

- 2.1. This Notice applies to manned submersible craft (including one man submersible craft and atmospheric diving suits) which are:
  - i. operated within Bahamian waters; or
  - ii. launched, recovered, operated or supported from a Bahamian ship.
- 2.2. This Notice **does not** apply to:
  - i. submersible craft which are not in commercial use, though it is strongly recommended that the Notice is applied to such craft
  - ii. unmanned Remote Operated Vehicles (ROVs), Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) and similar unmanned craft
  - iii. diving bells<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> "diving bell" means any compression chamber which is capable of being manned and is used or designed for use under the surface of the water in supporting human life being a chamber in which any occupant is or may be subjected to a pressure of more than 300 millibars above atmospheric pressure during normal operation

### 3. Definitions

- 3.1. For the purposes of this Notice, the following definitions apply:
- i. ***“Bahamian ship”*** means any ship or unit registered under the Merchant Shipping Act 1976
  - ii. ***“Bahamian waters”*** means all areas of water subject to the jurisdiction of The Bahamas, and includes territorial waters, internal waters and archipelagic waters
  - iii. ***“Collapse depth”*** means that depth at which failure of the pressure hull is estimated to occur, due to the external water pressure
  - iv. ***“Company”*** is the entity responsible for the management of the submersible craft (this will usually be the entity responsible for the management of the parent craft in accordance with the ISM Code)
  - v. ***“Crew”*** means the person or persons within the submersible craft required to operate the craft and its equipment
  - vi. ***“Depth”*** means the water depth measured from the surface to the lowest part of the submersible craft’s pressure hull
  - vii. ***“Life support systems”*** means equipment installed to render a manned submersible craft habitable in all anticipated operating conditions and includes breathing systems, temperature and humidity control equipment, waste disposal and toxic fume removal equipment and food and water supplies
  - viii. ***“Maximum operating depth”*** means the maximum depth to which the submersible craft is designed to submerge during normal operations (also specified as Nominal Diving Depth)
  - ix. ***“Parent craft”*** means any vessel, structure or place from which a submersible craft is launched or recovered or from which it is supported or operated
  - x. ***“Pilot”*** means the person appointed to command the submersible craft or, in the case of a submersible craft which is an atmospheric diving suit, to operate that diving suit
  - xi. ***“Submersible craft”*** means any description of manned mobile submersible apparatus which is designed to maintain some or all of its occupants at or near atmospheric pressure and includes free, self-propelled, tethered, towed or bottom contact propelled apparatus and atmospheric diving suits
  - xii. ***“Supporting equipment”*** means the launching and recovery gear used in connection with a submersible craft.

### 4. Registration

- 4.1. As per the provisions of the [Merchant Shipping \(Registration of Submersible Craft\) Regulations 1987, as amended](#)<sup>2</sup> manned submersible craft are required to be registered with the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/registration-of-submersible-craft-1987/>

- 4.2. Each manned submersible craft must have a unique name in order to be entered onto the register. Where no name is allocated to the submersible craft, the manufacturer name and hull number may be used as the name to be entered onto the register.
- 4.3. To register the craft, the following documents shall be completed and forwarded to the Registrar at any BMA office (or [reg@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:reg@bahamasmaritime.com)):
- i. BMA Form R102 (Application to register a ship)
  - ii. BMA Form R103 (Authorised officer declaration)(notarised)
  - iii. BMA Form R104 (Registration of managing owner)
  - iv. BMA Form R105 (Declaration of ownership) (notarised or signed in presence of Registrar)
  - v. BMA Form R108 (URCA Ship Radiocommunications licence) *(only if the craft is fitted with radio transmitting equipment: the radio licence will be associated with the parent craft)*.
  - vi. Bill of Sale and/or Builder's Certificate (notarised)
  - vii. Copy of Protocol of Delivery and Acceptance
  - viii. Copy of Transcript of Register (less than 48 hours old) *(Only if the submersible is already registered with another flag)*
  - ix. Certificate of Registry *(Only if the submersible is already registered with another flag)*
  - x. Copy of Certificate of Company Incorporation
  - xi. Original Certificate of Good Standing (less than 3 months old)
  - xii. Certificate of Survey or Certificate of Class issued by a Bahamas Recognised Organisation
- 4.4. In addition to the above, the following information shall be submitted to the BMA Inspections & Surveys department ([tech@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:tech@bahamasmaritime.com)):
- i. Drawing showing layout, principal parts, and construction materials of the submersible craft with general description (standard configuration)
  - ii. Builder
  - iii. Name of Classification Society under whose surveillance the craft was built (if any), class awarded and date *(if different from that stated in the Certificate of Class/Survey described in item 4.3.xii)*.
  - iv. Designer *(if not shown on Certificate of Class/Certificate of Survey)*
  - v. Date of build or launch *(if not shown on Certificate of Class/Certificate of Survey)*
  - vi. Overall dimensions *(if not shown on Certificate of Class/Certificate of Survey)*
  - vii. Collapse depth estimation *(if not shown on Certificate of Class/Certificate of Survey)*
- 4.5. Annual registration fees are payable for submersible craft – please contact the BMA for details.

- 4.6. Ancillary fees for the issue of a Certificate of Registry, allotment of signal letters, MMSI and official number and the issue of a radio licence are as indicated in BMA Marine Notice 50.

## **5. Design & Construction**

- 5.1. Manned submersible craft should be designed and constructed in accordance with the [Merchant Shipping \(Submersible Craft Construction and Survey\) Regulations 1981, as amended](#)<sup>3</sup> under the supervision of a Bahamas Recognised Organisation.
- 5.2. Manned submersible craft designed and constructed in accordance with IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) circular MSC/Circ.981 will also be considered.
- 5.3. Where a manned submersible craft is built to rules and standards other than those indicated above, the Recognised Organisation should be consulted for further advice. The Recognised Organisation shall consider the alternative standard against the Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft Construction and Survey) Regulations and provide a recommendation on suitability to the BMA.

## **6. Survey & Certification**

- 6.1. Manned submersible craft shall be classed with a Bahamas Recognised Organisation at all times whilst in operation.
- 6.2. Manned submersible craft shall hold a Passenger Submersible Craft Safety Certificate, issued by the Recognised Organisation on behalf of The Bahamas, on satisfactory completion of surveys indicated below.
- 6.3. The Passenger Submersible Craft Safety Certificate shall be in the form shown in the Annex.
- 6.4. Manned submersible craft are subject to the following surveys:
- i. An initial survey before the Passenger Submersible Craft Safety Certificate is issued for the first time. The initial survey shall include verification that the submersible craft is marked with its official number, name (if it has one) and port of registry (Nassau);
  - ii. An annual survey to ensure that the passenger submersible craft and its fittings, arrangements and equipment remain in compliance with the relevant standards and are in good working order. A trial dive to a depth allowing for submerged manoeuvring as well as testing of all safety and emergency functions should be

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/submersible-craft-construction-and-survey-1981/>

- undertaken on completion of the survey. The annual survey should be endorsed on the Passenger Submersible Craft Safety Certificate;
- iii. A renewal survey at intervals not exceeding two years. The renewal survey shall take place with the submersible craft out of water and should be a complete and thorough examination of the passenger submersible craft and its fittings, arrangements, equipment and materials and should ensure that the craft is in full compliance with the relevant standards. A trial dive to the maximum operating depth the submersible craft is intended to be operated with passengers (or the maximum depth practically attainable in the area of operation at the time of the trial dive), including testing of all safety and emergency features, should be undertaken on completion of the renewal survey.
  - iv. Additional surveys following the discovery of any defect or following any accident which affects the safety and certification of the submersible craft.
- 6.4.2. Surveys of submersible craft are not required to be harmonised with the ship's statutory surveys.
- 6.4.3. Annual surveys may be carried out within 3 months either side of the due date.
- 6.4.4. Renewal surveys should be carried out prior to the due date. The Passenger Submersible Craft Safety Certificate may be extended, on application to the BMA, for a period not exceeding four months. Recognised Organisations shall apply to the BMA for authorisation for any such extension ([tech@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:tech@bahamasmaritime.com)).

## 7. Operation

- 7.1. Manned submersible craft shall be operated in accordance with the [Merchant Shipping \(Submersible Craft Operations\) Regulations 1987, as amended](#)<sup>4</sup>.
- 7.2. The Company shall ensure that the submersible craft, its life support systems and supporting equipment are operated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- 7.3. The Company shall ensure that appropriate procedures for the normal operation and emergency operation of the submersible craft are incorporated in the parent craft's operational procedures and/or safety management system. Where procedures are included in the safety management system, they shall be verified during ISM Code audits.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/submersible-craft-operations-1987/>

## 8. Personnel & Training

- 8.1. Manned submersible craft shall be manned with, as a minimum, a pilot who has been trained and is competent in the operation of the affected craft. Documentary evidence of the training and competency of the pilot shall be available for inspection at all times.
- 8.2. The Company is responsible for ensuring that the pilot and any other crew members involved in the operation, maintenance, launching and/or recovery of the submersible craft, its life support systems, or its supporting equipment are trained and competent for their assigned duties, taking into account any instructions issued by the submersible craft manufacturer. Relevant procedures shall be included in the Company's safety management system and all persons shall have documentary evidence attesting to the appropriate training/competence.
- 8.3. A Minimum Safe Manning Document **is not** required for the craft.

## 9. Enquiries

- 9.1. Enquiries relating to registration of passenger submersible craft may be addressed to the BMA Registration department at [reg@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:reg@bahamasmaritime.com).
- 9.2. Enquiries relating to design, construction, survey, certification and operation of passenger submersible craft may be addressed to the BMA Inspections & Surveys department at [tech@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:tech@bahamasmaritime.com).
- 9.3. Enquiries relating to personnel and training may be addressed to the BMA Seafarers & Manning department at [stcw@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:stcw@bahamasmaritime.com).
- 9.4. Alternatively, please contact any BMA office.

**Annex – Form of Passenger Submersible Safety Certificate**

Certificate no:  
Page 1 of 3

**Passenger Submersible Craft Safety Certificate**

This certificate shall be supplemented by a Declaration of Survey

Issued under the provisions of the Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft Construction and Survey) Regulations, 1981 under the authority of the **Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas** by

**Particulars of Craft**

Name of passenger submersible craft (if any)  
Owner  
Official Number  
Port of registry NASSAU  
Class Register Number  
Length overall  
Width overall  
Normal lightweight displacement (empty weight + payload)  
Rated Depth (Nominal Diving Depth)  
Design Depth (Collapse Diving Depth)  
Total duration of life support in excess of normal mission time  
Payload  
Required crane load capacity  
Maximum number of passengers  
Minimum number of crew  
Number of lifejackets  
Number of Emergency Breathing units  
Design Sea Water Temperature to degrees Celsius

**Limiting Operational Conditions:**

**Limiting Environmental Conditions:**

Date on which the passenger submersible craft was first certified for the first time:

Date of the last dry-docking survey:

I, the undersigned        certify

- 1 That the above-mentioned passenger submersible craft has been duly surveyed in accordance with the provisions of the Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft Construction and Survey) Regulations, 1981.
- 2 That the survey showed that the systems, components and equipment and the conditions thereof are in all respects satisfactory and that the system complies with the relevant provisions.

The undersigned declares that he/she is authorised by The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas to issue this Certificate.

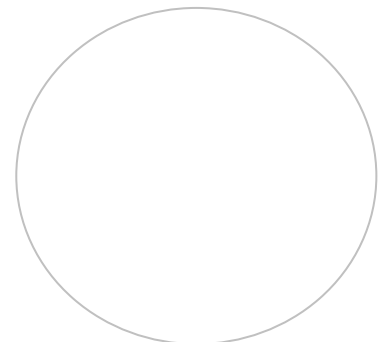
This certificate is valid until **dd MMMM yyyy** under the condition that annual and dry-docking surveys are performed in accordance with the Regulations.

Completion date of survey on which this certificate is based: **dd MMMM yyyy**

Issued at        (place), on        (date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

Seal or stamp of issuing authority:





### Surveys

This is to certify that, at a survey required by regulation 3 of the Regulations, this passenger submersible was found to comply with the relevant requirements.

Annual survey

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Place

Date

Additional survey

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Place

Date

Additional survey

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Place

Date

### Endorsement for the extension of the Certificate

The passenger submersible fully complies with the relevant provisions of the Regulations and this certificate shall, in accordance with Regulation 5(2) of the Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft Construction and Survey) Regulations 1981, be accepted as valid until **dd MMMM vvv**.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Place

Date

