
Survey Requirements for Cargo Ships of less than 500 gross tonnage

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

This Notice supersedes BMA Information Bulletin No.99

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this Notice is to outline the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) requirements for cargo ships of less than 500 gross tonnage.

2. Application

- 2.1. This Notice applies to all cargo ships of less than 500 gross tonnage.
- 2.2. This Notice **does not apply** to passenger ships or yachts (passenger, charter or private).

3. Definitions

- 3.1. For the purposes of this Notice:
- i. *Act* means the Merchant Shipping Act, 1976 (Ch.268);
 - 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. *Caribbean Trading Area* means an area bounded by a line from a point on the east coast of the United States of America in latitude 35° 00' north, to a point 5° 00' south, 33° 00' west; thence to a point 10° 00' south, 33° 00' west; thence to a point on the coast of Brazil in latitude 10° 00' south; thence northward along the coast of Continental America to a point in latitude 35° 00' north, on the east coast of the United States of America;
 - iv. *Cargo ship* means any ship which is not a passenger ship;
 - v. *CCSS Code* means the Code of Safety for Caribbean Cargo Ships;
 - vi. *Existing ship* means any ship which is not a new ship;
 - vii. *IACS* means the International Association of Classification Societies;
 - viii. *IMO* means the International Maritime Organization;

- ix. *International voyage* means a voyage from a port in one country to a port in another country;
- x. *MARPOL* means the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as amended
- xi. *New ship* means:
 - (a) in respect of the CCSS Code, a ship the keel of which is laid or which is at a similar stage of construction on or after 01 July 2016;
 - (b) in respect of the SCV Code, a vessel for which the initial construction began on or after 01 July 2015 or a vessel which has undergone a major conversion on or after this date;
- xii. *Occasional international voyages* means four (4) or less international voyages in any calendar year;
- xiii. *Passenger ship* means a ship which carries or is capable of carrying more than twelve (12) passengers;
- xiv. *Regular international voyages* means more than four (4) international voyages in any calendar year;
- xv. *SOLAS* means the International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended
- xvi. *SCV Code* means the Code of Safety for Small Commercial Vessels trading in the Caribbean Region;

4. Introduction

- 4.1. SOLAS does not generally apply to cargo ships of less than 500 gross tonnage (except vessels down to 300 gross tonnage with respect to radio-communication). Accordingly, cargo ships of less than 500 gross tonnage are often referred to as “non-Convention” vessels.
- 4.2. The BMA generally applies IACS Recommendation No.99 to non-Convention vessels operating internationally, subject to an annual survey.
- 4.3. For ships operating in the Caribbean Trading Area, the BMA applies the CCSS Code and SCV Code, depending on the size of the ship.
 - 4.3.1. The CCSS and SCV Codes provide a regional safety standard for small ships engaged in voyages in the Caribbean Trading Area and facilitate the operation of small ships of less than 500 gross tonnage that lie outside the scope of relevant International Conventions, thus ensuring a transparent and achievable level of safety for such ships and the personnel on board.
 - 4.3.2. The Codes are updated on a regular basis and were last updated in 2020 (CCSS Code) and 2021 (SCV Code).

- 4.3.3. The Codes are applicable to new ships, as defined in the respective Code, and, as far as practicable, to existing ships.
- 4.3.4. Existing ships shall comply with the provisions of the applicable Code(s) at the time of keel laying AND should comply with the latest Code(s) to the greatest extent practicable, as determined by the BMA on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.4. The BMA may also consider the application of equivalent standards on a case-by-case basis (examples include IACS Recommendation No. 99, United Kingdom MGN 280, United States of America 46 CFR 1, Sub-chapter K or T, etc.).
- 4.5. It should be noted that some International Maritime Conventions and Codes apply to ships of less than 500 gross tonnage undertaking international voyages. A table summarising the Conventions and Codes which apply to ships of less than 500 gross tonnage on international voyages is provided in Annex I.

5. IACS Recommendation No.99 (IACS99)

- 5.1. IACS99 provides a generally applicable code of safe practice in particular for fire protection, detection and extinction, safety equipment, radio installations and navigational equipment on non-Convention ships.
- 5.2. The BMA authorises its Recognised Organisations to apply IACS99 to non-Convention ships and issue Statements of Compliance, subject to satisfactory annual surveys.

6. The Code of Safety for Caribbean Cargo Ships (CCSS Code)

- 6.1. The CCSS Code applies to:
- i. cargo ships of less than 500 gross tonnage but greater than 24 metres (approximately 78 feet 9 inches) in length (L)¹; and
 - ii. all oil, chemical and gas tankers of less than 500 gross tonnage, irrespective of length
- that are engaged on international voyages in the Caribbean Trading Area.
- 6.2. The CCSS Code does not apply to:
- i. passenger ships;

¹ Length (L) or "Load Line length" means 96% of the total length on a waterline of a ship at 85% of the least moulded depth measured from the top of the keel, or the length from the fore-side of the stem to the axis of the rudder stock on that waterline, if that be greater. In ships designed with a rake of keel the waterline on which this is measured shall be parallel to the designed waterline.

- ii. military and government ships not used for commercial purposes;
- iii. cargo ships, other than oil tankers and tankers, of less than 24 metres in length (L) (see SCV Code);
- iv. pleasure craft not engaged in trade or commercial charter (i.e. private/non-commercial yachts);
- v. unmanned, non-propelled barges, other than tanker barges and barges carrying dangerous goods; and
- vi. fishing vessels.

7. The Code of Safety for Small Commercial Vessels (SCV Code)

- 7.1. The SCV Code applies to cargo ships of less than 500 gross tonnage, operating commercially on international voyages in the Caribbean Trading Area, that are between 5 metres (approx. 16 feet 5 inches). and 24 metres (approx. 78 feet 9 inches) in length (L).
- 7.2. The SCV Code also applies to passenger ships of less than 500 gross tonnage, operating commercially on international voyages in the Caribbean Trading Area, that are between 5 metres (approx. 16 feet 5 inches). and 24 metres (approx. 78 feet 9 inches) in length (L) and operate within 20 miles of the nearest harbour or safe refuge, carry not more than 150 passengers and where overnight accommodation is provided, not more than 50 passengers overnight. See BMA Marine Notice 99 for further information on passenger ships of less than 500 gross tonnage.
- 7.3. The SCV Code does not apply to:
 - i. Cargo ships of 24 metres and above in length (see CCSS Code);
 - ii. military and government ships not used for commercial purposes;
 - iii. pleasure craft not engaged in trade or commercial charter (i.e. private/non-commercial yachts);
 - iv. ships constructed or adapted for the carriage in bulk of liquid cargoes of a flammable or toxic nature (i.e. tankers and tanker barges);
 - v. fishing vessels.
 - vi. vessels holding a valid Passenger Ship Safety Certificate (PSSC) issued under the provisions of the SOLAS Convention;
 - vii. any boat forming part of a ship's lifesaving equipment that is used to carry passengers only in emergencies or during emergency exercises.

8. Inspections and surveys

- 8.1. Ships operating on regular international voyages outside of the Caribbean Trading Area shall be classed with a Classification Society that is a Bahamas Recognised Organisation. Please refer to BMA Marine Notice 02 for a list of current Recognised Organisations.
- 8.2. The survey of ships and issue or endorsement of the related IACS99, CCSS or SCV certificate, as appropriate, shall be carried out only by exclusive surveyors of a Bahamas Recognised Organisation or surveyors directly appointed by the BMA.
- 8.3. The Recognised Organisation shall promptly advise the BMA of any areas of non-compliance with the relevant Code.
- 8.4. Suspension or withdrawal of Class may result in the ship being detained and/or deleted from the Register.
- 8.5. Bahamas Approved Nautical Inspectors (ANIs) are not authorised to survey ships, or issue or endorse CCSS or SCV certificates for ships that are operating on regular international voyages.
- 8.6. ANIs may be authorised by the BMA on a case-by-case basis to survey ships and issue or endorse the related CCSS or SCV certificate, as appropriate, for ships that operate solely in Bahamian waters or are engaged only in occasional international voyages.
- 8.7. Ships surveyed under the Codes are also required to undergo annual inspections by a Bahamas ANI, in accordance with s.172(3) of the Merchant Shipping Act and as described in BMA Marine Notice 91. It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that inspections are carried out as required under the Act. Failure to carry out inspections on time may lead to detention of the ship or deletion of the ship from the register.
- 8.8. Vessels certified under the CCSS or SCV codes, in addition to annual inspections, may also be subject to occasional unannounced inspections by an officer of the BMA.

9. Issue or Endorsement of Certificates

- 9.1. A CCSS or SCV Certificate, as appropriate, will be issued after an initial or renewal survey of a ship confirming compliance with the requirements of the applicable Code. In the case of a CCSS Certificate, a Record of Equipment and Ship Information shall be permanently attached to the Certificate.

- 9.2. The CCSS and SCV certificates are both subject to annual and/or periodical surveys as specified in the relevant Code. When an annual/periodical survey is not carried out within the permitted survey window dates, according to the relevant Code, the certificate will be cancelled. In such cases, a renewal survey will be required before a new certificate is issued.

10. Maintenance of Conditions after Survey

- 10.1. The owner and master of every ship to which this Notice applies shall ensure that the condition of the ship and its equipment is maintained to comply with the provisions of the applicable Code and to ensure that the ship, in all respects, remains fit to proceed to sea.
- 10.2. After any survey of the ship under the relevant Code has been completed, no change shall be made in the structural arrangement, machinery, equipment and other items covered by the survey, without the agreement of the BMA.
- 10.3. Whenever an incident occurs to a ship or a defect is discovered, either of which affects the safety of the ship or the efficiency or completeness of its life-saving appliances or other equipment, the BMA shall be informed immediately, in accordance with BMA Information Bulletin No. 4. An additional survey may be required, at the discretion of the BMA. In such cases surveys shall be carried out as soon as practicable.

11. Extensions, Exemptions and Equivalent Arrangements

- 11.1. Applications for extensions, exemptions or acceptance of equivalent arrangements or Alternative Designs are to be submitted to the Recognised Organisation, who shall review and submit the applications to the BMA in accordance with BMA Information Bulletin No. 8.

12. Manning and Qualifications of Crew

- 12.1. All ships shall be manned in accordance with the Minimum Safe Manning Document (MSMD) issued by the BMA.
- 12.2. Applications for MSMDs shall be submitted to the Registrar at the time of registration of the ship. Requests for any subsequent amendment to the MSMD shall be submitted to either:
- i. the BMA's Nassau office at nassau@bahamasmaritime.com; or
 - ii. the BMA Seafarers and Manning Department at stcw@bahamasmaritime.com.

- 12.3. Please refer to BMA Information Bulletin No. 115.
- 12.4. Manning levels in accordance with the MSMD and the qualifications of the ship's master, officers and crew shall be verified at the time of surveys and inspections.

13. Marking of Vessel

- 13.1. All ships shall be marked in accordance with Section 10 of the Merchant Shipping Act.
- 13.2. Markings shall be permanent and conspicuous. Permanent marking may be made by:
- i. raised lettering; or
 - ii. cutting in; or
 - iii. centre punching; or
 - iv. any other equivalent method of marking the ship's name so that the marking is not easily expunged.

14. IMO Number Scheme

- 14.1. The IMO Number scheme applies to all seagoing ships of 100 gross tonnage and above, with the exception of the following:
- i. ships without mechanical means of propulsion;
 - ii. pleasure yachts;
 - iii. ships engaged on "special service" (e.g. lightships, floating radio stations, search and rescue vessels, etc.);
 - iv. hopper barges;
 - v. hydrofoils and hovercraft;
 - vi. floating docks and structures classified in a similar manner;
 - vii. ships of war and troop ships; and
 - viii. wooden ships in general.
- 14.2. The IMO Number Scheme is administered by IHS Markit behalf of the IMO.
- 14.3. If an IMO number has not already been assigned to a ship, the owner should apply to IHS Markit for allocation of an IMO number using the forms available on the IHS website. An IMO number is not required for ships operating exclusively in Bahamian waters.
- 14.4. To obtain an IMO number for both new and existing ships and to make ad hoc enquiries, please contact IHS Markit – details are provided on the IHS Markit website at <https://www.imonumbers.ih.com>.

15. Ships engaged on occasional international voyages

- 15.1. For the purposes of a delivery voyage, the ship may be issued with the applicable international certificates in accordance with the ship's characteristics (e.g. size, type, tonnage, etc.), taking into consideration Section 7 and 8 above, at the discretion of the BMA.

16. Queries

- 16.1. Any queries on this Notice may be addressed to tech@bahamasmaritime.com or any BMA office.

Gross tonnage	Length	Certificate/Document (Reference)	Issuing Body
any	≥ 24 metres	Load Line Certificate <i>(International Convention on Load Lines, 1966 as modified by the Protocol of 1988)</i>	RO ² or BMA
≥ 100gt	any	IMO number <i>(IMO Assembly Resolution A.1078(28))</i>	IHS Markit
≥ 300gt	any	Wreck Removal Insurance Certificate (applies irrespective of trading area) <i>(Nairobi International Convention on the Removal of Wrecks, 2007)</i>	BMA
≥ 400gt	any	International Oil Pollution Prevention Certificate & Oil Record Book Part I (& Part II for tankers) <i>(MARPOL Annex I)</i>	RO or BMA
≥ 400gt	any	International Sewage Pollution Prevention Certificate <i>(MARPOL Annex IV)</i> Also applies if ship carries more than 15 persons	RO or BMA
≥ 400gt	any	Garbage Management Plan & Garbage Record Book <i>(MARPOL Annex V)</i> Also applies if ship carries more than 15 persons	Owner
≥ 400gt	any	International Air Pollution Prevention Certificate & MARPOL Annex VI Record Book <i>(MARPOL Annex VI)</i>	RO
≥ 400gt	any	Engine International Air Pollution Prevention Certificate³ <i>(MARPOL Annex VI)</i>	Engine manufacturer
≥ 400gt	any	International Anti-fouling Certificate <i>(International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships, 2001)</i>	RO
≥ 400gt	any	Ballast Water Management Certificate & Ballast Water Record Book <i>(International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004)</i>	RO
<500gt	any	Statement of Compliance with IACS Recommendation No.99	RO
<500gt	<24 metres	Small Commercial Vessel Safety Certificate (except for passenger ships listed under paragraph 6.2) <i>(Code of Safety for Small Commercial Vessels trading in the Caribbean Region)</i>	RO
<500gt	≥ 24 metres	Caribbean Cargo Ship Safety Certificate (Cargo Ships Only) <i>(Code of Safety for Caribbean Cargo Ships)</i>	RO

² Bahamas Recognised Organisations are listed in BMA Marine Notice 02

³ See [BMA Information Bulletin No.75](#) for dates of application of MARPOL Annex VI