

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE  
MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION  
OF COMMERCIAL VESSELS  
ON THE THAMES  
2013



# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
<b>1 OBJECTIVES</b>	3
1.1 Objectives	3
1.2 Operational Policies	3
1.3 Functional Requirements for the Safety Management System for Type I Vessels	3
1.4 Functional Requirements for the Safety Management System for Type II Vessels	4
<b>2 HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTECTION POLICY</b>	5
<b>3 RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	5
3.1 Owners Responsibilities and Authority	5
3.2 The Designated Person(s)	5
3.3 The Master’s Responsibility and Authority	6
<b>4 PERSONNEL AND TRAINING</b>	6
4.1 Personnel and Training	6
4.2 Documentation	7
4.3 Owner Verification, Review and Evaluation	7
4.4 Crew Competencies	8
4.5 Safe Manning	9
4.6 Responsibilities of the Owner	9
4.7 Approval of Safe Manning Levels	10
<b>5 ONBOARD PROCEDURES</b>	11
<b>6 PREPARATION FOR EMERGENCIES</b>	11
<b>7 REPORTING OF ACCIDENTS AND NAVIGATIONAL INCIDENTS</b>	12
<b>8 MAINTENANCE OF THE VESSEL AND EQUIPMENT</b>	12

<b>9</b>	<b>TOWAGE OPERATIONS</b>	13
<b>10</b>	<b>CARGO OPERATIONS</b>	13
<b>11</b>	<b>VESSELS FITTED WITH A DECK CRANE OR OTHER LIFTING DEVICE</b>	14
<b>12</b>	<b>OIL POLLUTION PREVENTION</b>	15
<b>13</b>	<b>REVIEW OF THE SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM</b>	15
	 <b>APPENDICES</b>	16
1	Crew Competency Standards	
2	Minimum Manning Levels	

# **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF COMMERCIAL VESSELS ON THE THAMES**

**2013**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Code of Practice represents good practice in the management and operation of, and applies to, commercial vessels operating only within the tidal Thames (UK Categorised Waters C and D). The Code is designed to be used in conjunction with, and relates to, the Technical and Operational Standards for Commercial Vessels on the tidal Thames (the Thames Freight Standard).

The purpose of developing this Code is to establish a common standard for the safe operation of freight and general commercial service vessels operating on the tidal Thames.

The design and objectives of this Code of Practice are similar to those of the Maritime & Coastguard Agency's 'Safety Management Code for Domestic Passenger Ships' – MSN 1754 (M) refers. The intention is to introduce a broadly common approach for operators to the management and operation of passenger vessels, and freight and general service commercial vessels operating on the tideway.

This Code describes the general principles and objectives of developing a safety management system and how to implement it effectively.

## **Licensing Requirements**

Vessels licensed to work and navigate in the tidal Thames by the Port of London Authority (PLA) under the provisions of the Port of London Act, are required to comply with the requirements of this Code (as appropriate) in addition to meeting the requirements of the Thames Freight Standard as a pre-requisite for licensing and the maintenance and renewal of that licence.

The Owners of vessels operating on the tidal Thames, but licensed under different standards acceptable to the PLA e.g. the Small Commercial Vessel (SCV) Code, are nonetheless required to comply with the requirements of this Code in respect of the operation and management of those vessels.

### **The Owner**

References to the 'Owner' in this Code are taken to mean the owner of the vessel or any other organisation or person such as the manager, or the bareboat charterer, who has assumed responsibility for operation of the vessel from the vessel owner and who, on assuming such responsibility, has agreed to take over all duties and responsibilities imposed by the Thames Freight Standard.

1 June 2013

## **1. OBJECTIVES**

### **1.1 Objectives**

1.1.1 Vessels subject to this Code of Practice shall maintain an operational Safety Management System (SMS). The overall objectives of the SMS are to ensure safety, prevention of injury or loss of life, and avoidance of damage to the vessel, the environment, in particular to the marine environment, and to property.

1.1.2 Specifically the safety management objectives of the Owner should as a minimum:

- a) provide for safe practices for the vessel's navigation and operation, and a safe working environment for the crew;
- b) establish safeguards against all foreseeable risks; and
- c) continuously improve the safety-management skills of personnel ashore and aboard the vessel, including preparing for emergencies related both to safety and environmental protection.

1.1.3 The SMS should ensure:

- a) compliance with all mandatory rules and regulations; and
- b) that applicable codes, guidelines and standards recommended by the PLA and where appropriate, the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, and/or Certifying Authorities, Classification Societies, are taken into account.

### **1.2 Operational Policies**

1.2.1 The Owner should establish policies, which describe how the functional requirements identified in this Code of Practice, as applicable, will be achieved.

1.2.2 The Owner should ensure that the policies are implemented and maintained in all aspects of the vessel's operation.

### **1.3 Functional requirements for the Safety Management System for Type I Vessels**

Whilst strongly recommended, there is no formal requirement for Owners operating Type I Vessels to establish and maintain a structured, operational SMS. However, if they do, they should utilise and develop a SMS, which reflects their specific vessel operations.

As a minimum the SMS should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following functional requirements:

- a) Lines of communication and master and crew responsibilities;
- b) Health & Safety requirements;
- c) Personnel competency and training;
- d) On-board procedures including vessel and equipment maintenance;
- e) Procedures for the reporting of accidents and navigational incidents;
- f) Procedures to respond to emergency situations;
- g) Procedures to protect the marine environment;
- h) Mooring and cargo operations;
- i) Navigation and Passage Planning; and
- j) Demonstrating compliance with all applicable PLA regulations and Codes of Practice.

If the Owner maintains an operational SMS, compliance with the requirements of the SMS will be checked by the PLA at each inspection by auditing documentation on the vessel and ashore.

*Note: Type I Vessels includes, but are not limited to, workboats and all dumb barges. Type II Vessels includes, but are not limited to, motor barges, tank barges, oil storage barges, tugs, ship towage tugs, all powered vessels 24m and over load line length and all vessels fitted with a lifting device.*

#### **1.4 Functional requirements for the Safety Management System for Type II Vessels**

In addition to the requirements of Section 1.2, Owners of Type II Vessels should, through the full use of a suitable risk assessment process, develop, implement and maintain an appropriate and relevant operational SMS, which also includes the following functional requirements:

- a) a health and safety protection policy;
- b) operational safety, environmental protection & drugs and alcohol policies;
- c) instructions and procedures to ensure safe navigational and operation of the vessel, and protection of the environment in compliance with relevant legislation, codes of practice and/or guidance;
- d) defined levels of authority and lines of communication between and amongst, shore management and vessel personnel;
- e) procedures for reporting navigational incidents, accidents and non-conformities with regulatory and operational requirements;
- f) procedures to prepare for and respond to emergency situations; and
- g) procedures for internal audits and management reviews.

## **2. HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTECTION POLICY**

The Owner shall ensure that a Health and Safety Protection Policy is implemented on the vessel, and that responsibilities of all personnel are understood. There shall be a designated link between the vessel and the shore base, to ensure that in the event of an emergency there is direct communication with the Owner, in addition to immediate communication with the Emergency Services.

## **3. RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **3.1 Owner Responsibilities and Authority**

- 3.1.1 If the person responsible for the operation of the vessel is not the vessel Owner, the Owner must report the full name and contact details of the operator to the PLA.
- 3.1.2 The Owner should define and document the responsibility, authority, delegation and interrelation of all personnel (both afloat and ashore) who manage, perform and verify work relating to, and affecting safety and pollution prevention on board the vessel.

### **3.2 The Designated Person(s)**

- 3.2.1 To ensure the safe operation of each vessel and to provide a link between the Owner and those on board, every Owner must designate a person or persons ashore (Designated Person) having direct access to the highest level of management of the Owner. In single vessel or owner/operator companies (or in cases where the number of suitable available persons is limited) Owners may need to seek advice from the PLA as to whom may reasonably be considered to act as a Designated Person. The responsibility and authority of the Designated Person or persons should include:
  - a) Monitoring the safety management regime;
  - b) Ensure the navigational and operational objectives of the SMS are achieved;
  - c) Ensure the pollution prevention arrangements prescribed for the vessel are adhered to; and
  - d) Ensure that adequate resources and shore-based support are made available and applied, as required to ensure the objectives of the SMS are met.
- 3.2.2 The Owner is responsible for ensuring that adequate resources (both financial and material) and shore-based support are provided to enable the Designated Person to carry out their functions efficiently.



### **3.3 The Master's Responsibility and Authority**

- 3.3.1 The Owner should clearly define and document each vessel Master's responsibility with regard to:
- a) implementing the organisation's operations, drugs and alcohol, and safety and environmental-protection policies;
  - b) management and motivation of the crew in the observation of those policies;
  - c) issuing appropriate orders and instructions in a clear and simple format;
  - d) verifying that specified requirements are observed; and
  - e) reviewing the SMS and reporting its deficiencies to the shore-based management.
- 3.3.2 The Owner should establish in the SMS that the Master has the overriding authority and responsibility for the safety of the vessel and all persons on board; and to make decisions with the operation of the vessel in respect to all aspects of safety and pollution prevention and to request the Owner's assistance as may be necessary.

## **4. PERSONNEL AND TRAINING**

### **4.1 Personnel and Training**

- 4.1.1 The Owner should ensure that the Master is:
- a) properly qualified and experienced for command;
  - b) fully conversant with the Owner's SMS, the Master's role and responsibilities; and
  - c) given the necessary training and support so that the Master's duties can be safely performed.
- 4.1.2 The Owner shall:
- a) ensure that each vessel is manned with qualified, certificated and medically fit crew in accordance with the competency requirements detailed in this Code of Practice;
  - b) establish procedures to ensure that new personnel and personnel transferred to new assignments related to on board operations are given proper familiarisation with their duties;
  - c) ensure that all personnel involved in the Owner's SMS have an adequate understanding of relevant rules, regulations, codes and guidelines, and apply them as required;
  - d) establish and maintain procedures for identifying any training, which may be required in support of the SMS and ensure that such training is provided (including refresher training as necessary) for all personnel concerned;

- e) establish procedures by which the vessel's personnel receive relevant information on the SMS in a working language or languages understood by them; and
- f) ensure that the vessel's personnel are able to communicate effectively in the execution of their duties related to the SMS and vessel operations.

## **4.2 Documentation**

4.2.1 The Owner should establish and maintain appropriate and effective procedures to control all documents and data which are relevant to the SMS.

4.2.2 The Owner should ensure that:

- a) valid documents are available at all relevant locations on-board and/or ashore;
- b) changes to documents are reviewed and approved by authorised personnel; and
- c) obsolete documents are promptly removed.

4.2.3 The documents used to describe and implement the SMS may be referred to as the Safety Management Manual. Documentation should be kept in a form that the Owner considers most effective. Each vessel should carry on board all documentation relevant to that vessel.

## **4.3 Owner Verification, Review and Evaluation**

4.3.1 The Owner should carry out regular, periodic internal audits and commission periodic external audits in order to verify whether operational safety and pollution-prevention activities comply with the SMS.

4.3.2 The Owner should periodically evaluate the efficiency of and, when needed, review the SMS in accordance with procedures established by the Owner.

4.3.3 The audits and possible corrective actions should be carried out in accordance with documented procedures.

4.3.4 Personnel carrying out audits should be appropriately trained and operationally independent of the areas being audited, unless this is impracticable due to the size and the nature of the organisation.

- 4.3.5 The results of the audits and reviews should be brought to the attention of all personnel having responsibility in the area involved.
- 4.3.6 The management personnel responsible for the area involved should take timely corrective action on deficiencies found and suitable records of such action should be maintained.

#### **4.4 Crew Competencies**

- 4.4.1 Vessels licensed by the PLA shall meet the minimum manning levels and crew competency requirements identified by the PLA, as set out in this Code of Practice.

In addition:

- 4.4.2 Any person appointed as a Master must be 18 years of age or over.
- 4.4.3 Every vessel carrying a marine VHF radio shall have on-board at least one person holding a Marine VHF Radio Operators Certificate.
- 4.4.4 On any vessel that carries radar, the Master and any member of the crew who may undertake navigational watch keeping duties are required to undertake appropriate training in its use.
- 4.4.5 Persons who are able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the PLA that they have appropriate engineering experience and competency, may be granted an exemption from the requirement to attend an Approved Engine Course. Such a Course will cover the following topics:
  - a) introduction to compression ignition and spark ignition engines;
  - b) engine cycles;
  - c) construction and operational details;
  - d) fuel, air, cooling, lubrication and electrical systems;
  - e) power transmission;
  - f) hull fittings;
  - g) oil and garbage pollution prevention;
  - h) safe working practices;
  - i) basic fire prevention and fire fighting techniques;
  - j) dangers of asphyxiation in the use of gaseous and vaporising fluid extinguishing mediums; safety requirements of bottled gas installations; and
  - k) fault finding and rectification within all topics.

4.4.6 Minimum competency standards for Masters, Mates and Engineers (as appropriate) are laid down in Appendix 1 of this Code.

#### **4.5 Safe Manning**

4.5.1 The numbers of certificated and non-certificated crew must be sufficient to ensure safe and efficient operation of the vessel at all times as determined by a comprehensive risk assessment undertaken by the Owner and agreed by the PLA.

Any reductions from the published minimum manning levels shall be determined by the Owner's risk assessment, dependent upon the nature and area of operation of the vessel(s).

##### **4.5.2 Type I Vessels**

The level of safe manning for a Type I Vessel is generally considered to be a minimum of 2 persons. However, the Owner may propose a lower level of manning, subject to undertaking a risk assessment, which will be reviewed by the PLA. Alternatively, the Owner's or a PLA risk assessment may require a higher level of manning for a particular operation or service.

##### **4.5.3 Type II Vessels**

The level of safe manning for a Type II Vessel is generally considered to be a minimum of 3 persons. However, the Owner may propose a lower level of manning, subject to undertaking a risk assessment, which will be reviewed by the PLA. Alternatively, the Owner's or a PLA risk assessment may require a higher level of manning for a particular operation or service.

4.5.4 Minimum safe manning requirements for vessels operating under this Code of Practice are laid down in Appendix 2. These requirements assume a level of crew, appropriate to all reasonably, foreseeable circumstances and working conditions to permit the safe operation of the vessel under normal conditions.

#### **4.6 Responsibilities of the Owner**

In fulfilling their responsibility to ensure that vessels are safely and sufficiently manned, Owners should:

- a) make an assessment of the tasks, duties and responsibilities of the vessel's complement, required for its safe operation, for the protection of the marine environment and dealing with emergency situations; then
- b) assess the numbers and grades/capacities in the vessel's complement required for the safe operation, for the protection of the environment, and for dealing with emergency situations; and always
- c) ensure that the identified manning and competency levels are adequate at all times and in all respects, including meeting peak workloads and in accordance with the principles contained in this Section;
- d) in case of changes in trading area(s), operations, construction, machinery, equipment or operation and maintenance of the vessel, which may affect the safe manning, the Owner must review the level of manning and revise the competency requirements as necessary;
- e) identify all the functions to be undertaken on board during a representative passage or operational period, including determination of the number of personnel required to undertake the relevant tasks and duties under both peak and routine work load conditions;
- f) identify those functions that constitute a normal operation and determine the numbers of personnel required to undertake the concurrent tasks and duties safely;
- g) identify the skills and experience required to perform those functions;
- h) establish working arrangements to ensure that the master and crew are capable of undertaking concurrent and continuing operations at the appropriate level(s) of responsibility, as specified, with respect to their skills and training; and
- i) ensure that the working arrangements allow for sufficient rest periods to avoid fatigue and to comply with the requirements of MSN 1778 - Merchant Shipping (Working Time: Inland Waterways) Regulations 2003 or any subsequent revision to, or replacement of those Regulations.

#### **4.7 Approval of Safe Manning Levels**

- 4.7.1 The Owner will consult with the PLA on their proposed manning levels. Once agreed, a record of the consultation process should be retained by the Owner, together with a record of the agreed manning level.
- 4.7.2 The manning level need not be reviewed for each trip or passage or operational cycle provided it is applicable to the operation in question.
- 4.7.3 Changes should not be made to the manning level unless they can be justified by substantially altered work patterns made necessary, for example, by a change in operation or other significant factor. Where a vessel is known to engage in an irregular operational pattern or have working hours that are unlikely to be uniform, this should be taken into account when considering the manning level.
- 4.7.4 Once agreed, the Owner should ensure the safe manning level is maintained and that vessel operations are in compliance with the Merchant Shipping (Working Time: Inland Waterways) Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/3049).

#### **5. ONBOARD PROCEDURES**

The Owner should establish procedures for the preparation, implementation and maintenance of plans and procedures and instructions, including checklists as appropriate, for key on-board operations concerning the safety of the vessel and the prevention of pollution. The various tasks involved should be defined and assigned to properly qualified and trained personnel.

#### **6. PREPARATION FOR EMERGENCIES**

- 6.1 The Owner should establish procedures to develop, test and maintain plans that identify, describe and respond to hazards, accident and emergency on-board situations; and for linking into port emergency procedures, as appropriate.
- 6.2 The Owner should establish and maintain programmes for drills and exercises to prepare for on-board emergency situations.

- 6.3 The SMS should include contingency procedures, including appropriate lines of communication between personnel ashore and afloat, in order to ensure that the Owner's organisation can respond at any time to hazards, accidents and emergency situations involving its vessels.

## **7. REPORTING OF ACCIDENTS AND NAVIGATIONAL INCIDENTS**

- 7.1 The SMS should include procedures for ensuring that non-conformities, accidents, near-misses, navigational incidents and hazardous occurrences are reported to the Owner, the PLA and regulatory agencies as appropriate (e.g. MAIB and MCA), investigated and analysed with the objective of improving safety and pollution prevention.
- 7.2 The Owner should establish and maintain procedures for the implementation of corrective action following appropriate investigation.

## **8. MAINTENANCE OF THE VESSEL AND EQUIPMENT**

- 8.1 The Owner should establish and maintain procedures to ensure that the vessel and its equipment (including towing equipment, as appropriate) are maintained as required by the Thames Freight Standard, this Code of Practice and any other requirements, legislation or guidance.
- 8.2 In meeting these requirements the Owner should ensure that:
- a) inspections and audits are held at appropriate intervals;
  - b) any non-conformity is reported, with its possible cause, if known;
  - c) appropriate corrective action is taken; and
  - d) records of these activities are maintained and available for inspection by the PLA.
- 8.3 The Owner should establish and maintain procedures in its SMS to identify equipment and technical systems, to which the sudden operational failure may result in hazardous situations. The SMS should provide specific measures aimed at promoting the reliability of such equipment or systems. These measures should include the regular testing of stand-by arrangements and equipment or technical systems that are not in continuous use.

## **9. TOWAGE OPERATIONS**

- 9.1 The Master of any vessel engaged in towing should hold qualifications appropriate to the size and type of vessel they are operating. Guidance on the necessary qualifications required can be provided by the PLA.
- 9.2 Towing operations should be undertaken having full regard to the requirements and information provided in the current, PLA Codes of Practice for Ship Towage Operations and Craft Towage Operations on the Thames (as appropriate), which should be referenced in the vessel's Safety Management System and readily available both on the PLA website at [www.pla.co.uk](http://www.pla.co.uk) and in hard copy. Guidance is also readily available from the British Tugowners' Association. The Owner should also take into account the information provided in relevant Merchant Shipping Notices, which give guidance on safety of vessels engaged in towing; and should ensure that the Master is aware, and has copies of these on-board. Particular attention is drawn to the guidance provided in MGN 199 (M+F) – "Dangers of Interaction".

## **10. CARGO OPERATIONS**

- 10.1 When a vessel is engaged in carrying cargo, an assessment of the cargo operations should be conducted to ensure all such cargo is properly stowed and where necessary, secured in a manner, which will not adversely compromise the stability and/or the safe operation of the vessel.
- 10.2 The loading and discharge of cargo should be monitored by a competent person at all times. Cargo must not be loaded or discharged such that the stability of the vessel is compromised at any time.
- 10.3 Risk assessments shall be undertaken, to the satisfaction of the Harbour Master, to determine the methodologies used to load and/or discharge the vessel. Hazards to be considered in the risk assessment include, but are not limited to, the following: avoidance of cargo spillage into the river or onto the vessel; transportable moisture content, incorrect trim / heel / stability, overloading, untrained / inexperienced personal, unsecured cargo, free surface effect, inadequate load / discharge supervision, poor wheelhouse visibility.



- 10.4 Masters must ensure that the vessel is at no time loaded in such a way that it exceeds the plane of maximum draught for the area or type of operation, as required by the Thames Freight Standard or the vessel's licensing authority, whichever is appropriate.
- 10.5 Particular attention should be drawn to the following:
- a) means for securing the cargo;
  - b) the strength of securing points;
  - c) the free drainage of water from a cargo stowed on open deck;
  - d) safe access past stowed cargo (above and below decks); and
  - e) unobstructed visibility from the wheelhouse.
- 10.6 Where there is any likelihood or doubt that the moisture content of the cargo may adversely affect the stability of the vessel, the material must be tested before loading.

## **11. VESSELS FITTED WITH A DECK CRANE OR OTHER LIFTING DEVICE**

- 11.1 A visual inspection of the crane or lifting device should be carried out in accordance with MGN 332 before lifting operations.
- 11.2 Owners must ensure that all lifting equipment and operations meet the requirements of BS 7121: Part 2:2003 - Code of Practice for Safe Use of Cranes, Inspection, Testing and Examination. (Paragraph 17 - Cranes on Water Borne Craft).
- 11.3 The Owner should be satisfied that the safety of the vessel is not compromised by lifting operations. Means should be provided for the efficient securing of cargo and loose equipment on-board during lifting operations. Instructions on safety procedures to be followed by the Master should be provided on-board and recorded in the SMS.

Further guidance can be found in MGN 332 (M+F). This Code does not aim to replicate these regulations or guidance and it is the responsibility of the Owner to ensure that they fully comply.

- 11.4 The Merchant Shipping (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 No. 2184), as amended, apply to lifting equipment, lifting attachments and their operation and should be considered in conjunction with the Merchant Shipping (Provision and Safe Use of Work Equipment) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 No. 2183), as amended, and the Code of Practice for Merchant Seamen.

## **12. OIL POLLUTION PREVENTION**

- 12.1 All vessels must comply with relevant international, national and local requirements, for the prevention of marine pollution applicable to the vessel and the area in which it is operating. Responsibility for the vessel to be properly equipped and maintained and to ensure that the Master receives up-to-date and adequate information rests with the Owner.
- 12.2 Oily residues and garbage or refuse and other wastes must be landed ashore at proper disposal facilities and not discharged or disposed of overboard. All vessels operating under this Code of Practice and the Thames Freight Standard must display placards informing the crew of the disposal requirements of garbage under MARPOL.
- 12.3 It is the responsibility of the Owner to comply with any additional legislation relevant to the size and type of the vessel and/or operation.

## **13. REVIEW OF THE SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Every Owner should undertake a review of the safety management system of every vessel it operates at least once every three years. Such a review should be in addition to any internal or external audits carried out on those systems.

# APPENDIX 1

## CREW COMPETENCY STANDARDS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This section identifies the minimum crew competency standards required for those navigating and working commercial vessels, licensed by the Port of London Authority (PLA) and operating under the Thames Freight Standard within the tidal Thames.

The minimum requirements for vessel Masters, Unsupervised Watchkeepers and Engineers (where required) are identified, and are detailed by vessel type. (See Section 5).

### 2. COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

#### **National Boatmasters' Licence**

The principal qualification required is normally the Maritime & Coastguard Agency's (MCA) national Boatmasters' Licence, Tier 1, Level 2, with relevant specialist endorsements. Where appropriate, acceptable, alternative qualifications are identified within the requirements, and may be considered and allowed, subject to risk assessment.

#### **Thames Local Knowledge Requirements**

The Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement area for the purposes of both the national Boatmasters' Licence and the PLA's requirements extends between Margaretness and Putney Bridge.

In addition to the MCA's requirements under the national Boatmasters' Licence legislation for a Local Knowledge Endorsement when operating on the tidal Thames, the Port of London Thames Byelaws 2012 – Byelaw 22 requires that:

The Master of any vessel which is:

- a) less than 40 metres but greater than 13.7 metres in length overall, and not subject to compulsory pilotage; or
- b) less than 13.7 metres in length overall engaged in towing or carrying passengers; and
- c) not a pleasure vessel

if navigating and/or working in the Thames local knowledge area, is required to hold a valid Boatmasters' Licence Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement; or alternatively, to demonstrate such local knowledge to an equivalent standard, through assessment by the PLA.

(This requirement does not apply in emergency situations or to persons holding a valid sailing barge masters qualification issued by the Sailing Barge Masters Qualification Board).

### **Specialist Endorsements**

Appropriate, valid endorsements must be held for specialist operations, as required by national legislation e.g. towing & pushing, general cargo, oil cargoes and dredging.

Appropriate, valid endorsements issued under the national Voluntary Towing Endorsement Scheme will be accepted, as appropriate.

### **Unsupervised Watchkeepers**

The PLA requires any Unsupervised Navigational Watchkeeper to hold an appropriate navigational watchkeeping qualification for the vessel and area of operation.

### **Engineers**

The aggregate power of a vessel's machinery will determine whether it is necessary to carry a dedicated Engineer and what level of qualification the Engineer must hold. Vessels of 24m and over load line length, with an aggregated power of more than 375Kw are required, as a minimum, to have a crew member on-board who holds an Approved Engine Course qualification. Notwithstanding this minimum standard of engineering competence, a dedicated risk assessment, undertaken in conjunction with the Owner, will determine the level of certification necessary for each vessel. This approach is also recommended for vessels of less than 24m load line length.

Full details of the Engineer qualifications required are shown in Section 5.

### **Alternative Qualifications**

Alternative qualifications are acceptable, subject to a number of criteria, including an appropriate risk assessment undertaken by the Owner, the vessel type, and the nature and area of operations. Whilst alternative qualification are detailed below, Owners should bear in mind that a number of these alternative standards include limitations in respect of the maximum size of vessel the holder is allowed to operate, operating distances from a safe haven, operating areas (Categorised Waters) and/or operation in the hours of darkness. The PLA will provide more details and advice in such cases.

### **Pilotage Exemption Certificates**

In addition to the requirements of the Thames Freight Standard and this Code of Practice, vessels operating in the London Pilotage District may be subject to compulsory pilotage and the requirements of the Port of London Pilotage Directions. In such cases, bona fide Deck Officers have the option to obtain a Pilotage Exemption Certificate.

### **3. VESSELS AUTHORISED TO EXCEED THE MANDATORY SPEED LIMIT**

The Port of London Thames Byelaws 2012 – Byelaw 16 provides for any vessels, subject to meeting certain technical and operational criteria, to exceed the mandatory 12kt speed limit in certain parts of the River. Full details are available from the PLA, but the Master or person conducting navigation on such vessels (a Certificate of Compliance Vessel) must hold an appropriate qualification, as identified in the relevant table below.

#### 4. **CATEGORISATION OF WATERS**

The majority of the tidal Thames is categorised as an Inland Waterway by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, as follows:

Category C: Between Teddington Lock and to the west of (above) a line drawn north / south through the eastern extremity of Denton Wharf, Gravesend.

Category D: To the east of (below) a line drawn north / south through the eastern extremity of Denton Wharf, Gravesend and:

In winter - (1 November to 31 March), within a line drawn from Colne Point to Whitstable; and

In summer - (1 April to 31 October), within a line drawn from Clacton Pier to Reculver Towers.

## 5. SUMMARY OF MINIMUM COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

### A. Masters and Unsupervised Watchkeepers

**VESSEL TYPE: SHIP TOWAGE TUG - 20t or Less Bollard Pull**

#### MASTER

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Towing & Pushing Endorsement Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	Officer of the Watch Reg II/1 or II/3 or Chief Mate or Master Reg II/2 or II/3 (STCW '95) STCW Inshore Tug Certificate of Competency

#### UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION	RYA Coastal Skipper Certificate (with appropriate endorsements)
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Towing & Pushing Endorsement (if towing) Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)

**VESSEL TYPE: SHIP TOWAGE TUG - Over 20t Bollard Pull**

#### MASTER

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	Officer of the Watch Reg II/1 or II/3 or Chief Mate or Master Reg II/2 or II/3 (STCW '95) STCW Inshore Tug Certificate of Competency
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Appropriate endorsement under the Voluntary Towing Endorsement Scheme: or Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	None

#### UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	Officer of the Watch Reg II/1 or II/3 or Chief Mate or Master Reg II/2 or II/3 (STCW '95) STCW Inshore Tug Certificate of Competency
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Appropriate endorsement under the Voluntary Towing Endorsement Scheme: or Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)

**Note:** *The crew competency requirements for vessels certificated under the Small Commercial Vessel Code will be determined on a case by case basis.*

**VESSEL TYPE: MOTOR TUG – Towing & Pushing****MASTER**

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Towing & Pushing Endorsement Dry Cargo Endorsement (as appropriate) Oil Cargoes Endorsement (as appropriate) Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	Considered on a case by case basis

**UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER**

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION	RYA Coastal Skipper Certificate (with appropriate endorsements)
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Towing & Pushing Endorsement (when towing) Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary) Appropriate endorsement under the Voluntary Towage Endorsement Scheme

**VESSEL TYPE: POWERED DREDGER****MASTER**

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Dredging Endorsement Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	Considered on a case by case basis

**UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER**

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION	RYA Coastal Skipper Certificate (with appropriate endorsements)
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Dredging Endorsement (when dredging) Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)



**VESSEL TYPE: MOTOR BARGE****MASTER**

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	General Cargo Endorsement (as appropriate) Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	Considered on a case by case basis

**UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER**

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION	RYA Coastal Skipper Certificate (with appropriate endorsements)
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	General Cargo Endorsement (as appropriate) Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)

**VESSEL TYPE: MOTOR TANK BARGE****MASTER**

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Oil Cargoes Endorsement (as appropriate) Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	None

**UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER**

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION	RYA Coastal Skipper Certificate (with appropriate endorsements)
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Oil Cargoes Endorsement (as appropriate) Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)

**VESSEL TYPE: WORK BOAT - 13.7m LOA or above****MASTER**

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	Officer of the Watch Reg II/1 or II/3 or Chief Mate or Master Reg II/2 or II/3 (STCW '95) Certificate of Competence - Yachtmaster Ocean / Offshore (MCA Accepted) RYA Cert. Competency - Coastal Skipper RYA Advanced Powerboat Certificate RYA Day Skipper Theory and Practical Certificate

**UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER**

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)

**VESSEL TYPE: WORK BOAT - Less than 13.7m LOA****MASTER**

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (voluntary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	Officer of the Watch Reg II/1 or II/3 or Chief Mate or Master Reg II/2 or II/3 (STCW '95) Certificate of Competence - Yachtmaster Ocean / Offshore (MCA Accepted) RYA Cert. Competency - Coastal Skipper RYA Advanced Powerboat Certificate RYA Day Skipper Theory and Practical Certificate RYA Power Boat Level 2

**UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER**

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)

VESSEL TYPE:

**PASSENGER VESSEL –  
LICENSED TO CARRY 12 OR LESS PASSENGERS**

**MASTER**

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	Officer of the Watch Reg II/1 or II/3 or Chief Mate or Master Reg II/2 or II/3 (STCW '95) Certificate of Competence - Yachtmaster Ocean / Offshore (MCA Accepted) RYA Cert. Competency - Coastal Skipper RYA Advanced Powerboat Certificate RYA Day Skipper Theory and Practical Certificate Thames Sailing Bargemaster's Certificate

**UNSUPERVISED WATCHKEEPER**

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement (as necessary)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	None

VESSEL TYPE:

**CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE VESSEL**

**MASTER**

PRINCIPAL QUALIFICATION	National Boatmasters' Licence – Tier 1, Level 2
SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENTS	Thames Local Knowledge Endorsement or PLA Local Knowledge Endorsement (as required)
ALTERNATIVE QUALIFICATIONS	Officer of the Watch Reg II/1 or II/3 or Chief Mate or Master Reg II/2 or II/3 (STCW '95)  Small vessel, not carrying passengers – Single manned: RYA Advanced Powerboat Certificate or RYA Powerboat Instructor Certificate – Both certificates must have appropriate endorsements

## B. Engineers

### Vessels of 24m and over load line length

The PLA requires all such vessels with an aggregate machinery power greater than 375kW to employ a member of the crew who is suitably trained and certificated to a minimum engineering standard. That minimum standard is an Approved Engine Course or recognised equivalent.

However, the specific engineering competency requirements for each vessel will be determined in conjunction with the vessel Owner, and will be guided by the outcome of a structured risk assessment submitted by the Owner, which takes into account the following factors, namely, the:

- vessel's area of operation;
- trading pattern of the vessel;
- complexity of the machinery spaces;
- vessel not operating under Unmanned Machinery Space conditions;
- technical complexity of the machinery, including its control and monitoring systems;
- redundancy of the essential machinery; the maintenance regime employed in the upkeep of the machinery, equipment and its control systems; and
- level and availability of technical shore support.

**Note:** *An Approved Engine Course is a course of at least thirty hours duration, which is approved or recognised by the MCA.*

The Table below provides an example of some established engineering competency standards and possible relationships to aggregated machinery power. Other equivalent competencies will be considered.

AGGREGATE MACHINERY POWER	RECOMMENDED DQUALIFICATION
375kW to 750kW	Approved Engine Course
751kW to 1500kW	Marine Engine Operator's Licence
1501kW to 3000kW	Senior Marine Engine Operator's Licence
Above 3000kW	Second Engineer (Coastal) - STCW

### Vessels less than 24m load line length

The PLA recommends the above approach be adopted in determining engineering qualifications on vessel less than 24m load line length (as appropriate).

## APPENDIX 2

### MINIMUM MANNING LEVELS

**Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> Owners wishing to operate their vessels single handed shall provide a written risk assessment to the PLA for consideration.
- <sup>2</sup> Minimum manning shall be determined by the number of craft being towed.
- <sup>3</sup> Where safe manning requires a person with an engineering competency, that person may if appropriately trained, perform a dual role, and act in another capacity.

#### Vessels licensed under the Thames Freight Standard

Vessel Description	Minimum Manning Level			
	Master	Mate / Unsupervised Watchkeeper	Crew	Engineer
Motor Tank Barge	1	1	1	<sup>3</sup> Where required through risk assessment; and/or all vessels 24m and over load line length with an aggregate power output of more than 375Kw
Motor Barge	1	1	1	
Motor Tug ≤50gt <sup>1</sup>	1	1		
Motor Tug >50gt engaged in Pushing or Towing Alongside	1	1	1	
Motor Tug >50gt Engaged in Towing Multiple Craft Astern	1	1	Minimum of 2 <sup>2</sup>	
Workboat ≤ 15gt <sup>1</sup>	1	1		
Workboat >15gt <sup>1</sup>	1	1		

## NOTES

## NOTES

## NOTES



# NOTES



PUBLISHED BY:  
THE PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY  
LONDON RIVER HOUSE  
ROYAL PIER ROAD  
GRAVESEND, KENT DA12 2BG

TELEPHONE 01474 562200  
FAX 01474 562277

[WWW.PLA.CO.UK](http://WWW.PLA.CO.UK)

EFFECTIVE FROM 1ST JUNE 2013