

Amendments to STCW F Convention as per MSC.561 (108) & MSC.562 (108)

Relevant for ship owners, managers and Surveyors

TI - 25-17

Dec. 2025

Introduction

The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F Convention), has historically lacked a mandatory technical code comparable to the STCW Convention, 1978. To address inconsistencies in training, certification and enforcement, the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), at its 108th session, adopted:

- a) Amendments to the annex to the STCW-F Convention (resolution MSC.561 (108)); and
- b) The Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel Code (STCW-F Code) (resolution MSC.562 (108)).

These instruments collectively modernize the STCW-F framework and introduce mandatory, auditable standards of competence.

Purpose and scope

The purpose of this Technical Information is to provide an overview of the adopted amendments, including their structure, scope of application and transitional arrangements, in order to support consistent implementation by Administrations, recognized organizations (ROs), ship-owners, managers, surveyors and approved training institutions.

This Technical Information is of an informative nature only and does not replace or supersede the requirements of the STCW-F Convention, the STCW-F Code, or any applicable national legislation.



Entry into force and acceptance

The amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F Convention), adopted by resolution MSC.561(108), shall **enter into force on 1 January 2026**, in accordance with article XII of the Convention.

The amendments to the STCW-F Code, adopted by resolution MSC.562 (108), shall enter into force on the same date and shall be applied in conjunction with the amended Convention.

Summary of regulatory changes

The amendments adopted by resolution MSC.561 (108) introduce a fundamental revision to the regulatory architecture of the STCW-F Convention by establishing a two-tier framework consisting of the Convention itself and the STCW-F Code. The Convention, as amended, sets out the overarching obligations of Parties, while the Code provides the detailed technical standards necessary for uniform application. This approach aligns the STCW-F Convention with the long-established structure of the STCW Convention, 1978, and addresses longstanding deficiencies arising from the absence of mandatory technical provisions.

A central element of the amendments is the formal incorporation of the STCW-F Code into the Convention. Regulation I/1 of the revised annex establishes that the mandatory provisions contained in Part A of the STCW-F Code form an integral part of the Convention. As a result, compliance with the competence standards, training requirements, medical fitness provisions and certificate/endorsement formats set out in Part A of the Code is a legal obligation for Parties. Conversely, failure to comply with these provisions constitutes non-compliance with the Convention itself. Part B of the Code is recommendatory in nature and is intended to provide guidance to support consistent implementation, without creating additional binding obligations.

The amendments further clarify and strengthen provisions relating to certification and endorsement. The revised text specifies the conditions under which certificates of competency may be issued, revalidated and recognized by Administrations, and clarifies responsibilities between issuing and recognizing Parties. Standardized certificate and endorsement formats, set out in the mandatory Code provisions, facilitate verification and consistent recognition during inspections and port State control activities.

In addition, the revised Convention strengthens requirements for control and oversight by Administrations. Parties are required to maintain effective systems for supervision of training and certification, including measures to verify continued competence and to investigate cases of improper or fraudulent certification, thereby supporting confidence in the qualifications of fishing vessel personnel.

Structure of the STCW-F Code

Part A (Mandatory provisions): minimum mandatory requirements for standards of competence, training and assessment, medical fitness, and standardized formats for certificates and endorsements.

Part B (Recommended guidance): explanatory material and recommended practices intended to support uniform implementation of the Convention and Code.

Transitional Arrangements

The transitional provisions applicable to the amendments to the STCW-F Convention are set out in regulation I/8 of the amended Convention, as adopted by resolution MSC.561 (108).

It is noted that section A-I/8 of the STCW-F Code contains no provisions, and that the transitional arrangements are therefore governed exclusively by the Convention. In accordance with regulation I/8:

a) Recognition of existing certificates

Certificates of competency and endorsements issued by or under the authority of a Party to the STCW-F Convention before the entry into force of the amendments for that Party shall continue to be recognized as valid after the entry into force of the amendments, provided that they were issued in accordance with the Convention as in force at the time of issuance.

b) Issuance of certificates under previous provisions (five-year period)

A Party may, for a period not exceeding five years after the entry into force of the amendments for that Party, continue to issue certificates of competency in accordance with the provisions of the Convention as previously in force, to candidates who commenced approved seagoing service before the date of entry into force of the amendments for that Party, in the relevant department.

c) Issuance of certificates of service (two-year period)

A Party may, for a period not exceeding two years after the entry into force of the amendments for that Party, issue a certificate of service to fishing vessel personnel who:

- have completed not less than three years of approved seagoing service within the seven years preceding the entry into force of the amendments for that Party;
- have performed their duties satisfactorily; and
- meet the applicable medical fitness requirements.

After the expiry of the above transitional periods, all certification shall fully comply with the amended provisions of the STCW-F Convention and the mandatory requirements of Part A of the STCW-F Code.

Conclusion

The amendments adopted by resolutions MSC.561 (108) and MSC.562 (108) represent a substantial modernization of the STCW-F Convention by establishing a legally binding, competence-based framework comparable to that applied under the STCW Convention, 1978. Through the incorporation of the STCW-F Code and the designation of its Part A as mandatory, the revised Convention provides a clear and enforceable basis for the training, certification and medical fitness of fishing vessel personnel.

Administrations, recognized organizations, ship-owners, managers, auditors and approved training institutions are expected to take timely and coordinated action to ensure that training programmes, certification processes and associated controls are aligned with the revised STCW-F framework by the date of entry into force.

Disclaimer: Although all possible efforts have been made to ensure correctness and completeness of the contents contained in this information service, the Iranian Classification Society is not responsible for any errors or omissions made herein, nor held liable for any actions taken by any party as a result of information retrieved from this information service.