
Code of Safety for Special Purpose Ships (SPS Code)

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

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Notice describes the requirements of the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) for special purpose ships (SPS).

2. Application

- 2.1. This Notice applies to all special purpose ships registered in The Bahamas.
- 2.2. The SPS Code remains a non-mandatory Code and its degree of adoption by coastal States varies. The Company¹ should establish the certification requirements of the coastal State in which the ship is intended to operate and note that these requirements may be more stringent than those stated in this Notice.
- 2.3. This Notice **DOES NOT** apply to the carriage of industrial personnel (IP). Please refer to Marine Notice 102.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. For the purpose of this Notice:
- **Carriage** means transportation, accommodation, or both.
 - **HSC Code** means the International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft, 2000, as adopted by the Maritime Safety Committee of the Organization by resolution MSC.97(73), as amended.
 - **Industrial personnel (IP)** means all persons *transported or accommodated on board for the purpose of offshore industrial activities performed on board other ships and/or offshore facilities*. Such industrial personnel should not be considered or treated as passengers under SOLAS regulation I/2(e)

¹ The "Company" is the entity responsible for the management of the ship in accordance with the ISM Code. For ships which the ISM Code is not applicable, the Company is the Managing Owner in accordance with Section 52 of the Merchant Shipping Act.

- **Offshore industrial activities** mean the construction, maintenance, decommissioning, operation or servicing of offshore facilities related, but not limited, to exploration and exploitation of resources by the renewable or hydrocarbon energy sectors, aquaculture, ocean mining or similar activities.
- **Passenger** means every person other than the master and the members of the crew or other persons employed or engaged in any capacity on board a ship on the business of that ship; and a child under one year of age
- **Personnel transfer** means the full sequence of the operation of transferring personnel and their equipment at sea to or from a ship to which this Code applies and from or to another ship or an offshore facility.
- **Special personnel** means all persons who are not passengers or members of the crew or children of under one year of age and who are carried on board in connection with the special purpose of that ship or because of special work being carried out aboard that ship – see Annex 1 for examples of special personnel. Wherever in the Code the number of special personnel appears as a parameter it should include the number of passengers carried on board, which must not exceed 12.
- **Special purpose ship (SPS)** means a mechanically self-propelled ship which by reason of its function carries on board more than 12 special personnel including passengers.

3.2. The SPS Code, or “the Code” as referred to in this Notice, means:

- i. IMO Resolution [MSC.266\(84\) of 13 May 2008 – Code of Safety for Special Purpose Ships, 2008 \(2008 SPS Code\)](#), as amended by Resolutions MSC.299(87), MSC.408(96), MSC.445(99) and MSC.1/Circ.1422 (for ships certificated on or after 13 May 2008); or
- ii. IMO Resolution A.534(13) of 17 November 1983 – *Code of Safety for Special Purpose Ships, 1983 (1983 SPS Code)*, as amended by Resolutions MSC.183(79), MSC.453(100) and MSC.464(101). (for ships certificated before 13 May 2008).

4. Introduction

- 4.1. The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended (SOLAS) and Bahamas legislation allows a cargo ship to carry up to 12 passengers in addition to the crew. The SOLAS Convention defines a passenger as “*every person other than the master and members of the crew or other persons employed or engaged in any capacity on board a ship on the business of that ship*”. A ship carrying more than 12 passengers is, by definition, a passenger ship and is subject to enhanced constructional and operational requirements to ensure the safety of the passengers.
- 4.2. The BMA recognises that there are ships which are designed and operate in specialist roles when carrying more than 12 persons in addition to the crew, and under conditions that make compliance with passenger ship requirements inappropriate.

- 4.3. Persons working regularly on board, certified medically fit and having received relevant safety training are considered by the BMA to be special personnel with attributes that differ from a passenger.
- 4.4. The Special Purpose Ships Code (SPS Code) provides appropriate levels of safety for cargo ships carrying more than 12 persons in aggregate (i.e., including both special personnel and passengers), in addition to the crew. Application of the SPS Code provides beneficial operational flexibility for ships engaged in activities, other than as normal cargo-carrying ships. The SPS Code provisions for training and certification of special personnel on board offer practical alternatives to the SOLAS and STCW Conventions.
- 4.5. Many voyages involving the carriage of special personnel are non-international, in that they do not meet the definition in SOLAS I/2(d) for an “*international voyage*” (a “*voyage from a country to which the present Convention applies to a port outside such country, or conversely.*”). The BMA requires all ships, on any voyage involving the carriage of special personnel, to meet the SPS Code as detailed in this Notice.

5. Application of construction standards in the SPS Code

- 5.1. Ships carrying more than 12 special personnel and passengers in aggregate:
- i. if constructed² on or after 01 July 2024, shall comply with the 2008 SPS Code;
 - ii. if constructed between 13 May 2008 and 01 July 2024, should comply with the 2008 SPS Code;
 - iii. if constructed before 13 May 2008, should comply with either the 2008 or 1983 SPS Code.
- 5.2. Ships that are not built to the 1983 or 2008 SPS Code will be considered for certification as SPS on a case-by-case basis. In such cases, a gap analysis between the applicable requirements stated above and the actual arrangements shall be addressed to the Recognised Organisation.
- 5.3. The Recognised Organisation shall review applications prior to submitting an outcome of their assessment to the BMA. In their submission to the BMA (tech@bahamasmaritime.com) the Recognised Organisation shall clearly indicate their

² “constructed” in this Notice refers to the date on which the keel is laid or a similar stage of construction in accordance with SOLAS chapter II-1 and the 2008 SPS Code (the applicable date for new ships under the 2008 SPS Code being on or after 1 July 2024, in reflection of the discretion given to Administrations in paragraph 1.2.1 of the 2008 SPS Code).

support or reservation of any aspect of the application, and if relevant any recommendations or conditions that may be considered.

6. Training, medical fitness and certification requirements for special personnel

- 6.1. The SPS Code recognises that special personnel are expected to be able-bodied with a fair knowledge of the layout of the ship and to have received some training in safety procedures and the handling of the ship's safety equipment before leaving port but does not provide specific requirements.
- 6.2. It is suggested that owners and operators refer to BMA Marine Notice 15 – Manning, Training and Certification for the offshore Industry, when determining the training requirements for special personnel , so as to ensure adequate levels of safety of life and property at sea, security awareness and protection of the marine environment.

7. Queries

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

Revision History

Version	Description of Revision
1.0	First Issue

Annex 1

“Special personnel” may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- i. scientists or technicians engaged in research, hydrographic or oceanographic surveys, or expeditions;
- ii. personnel engaged in training and practical marine experience to develop seafaring skills suitable for a professional career at sea;
- iii. salvage personnel on salvage ships, cable-laying personnel on cable-laying ships, seismic personnel on seismic survey ships, diving personnel on diving support ships, pipe-laying personnel on pipe layers and crane operating personnel on floating cranes; and remotely operated vehicle technicians.

Classes of personnel not covered above are to be agreed with the BMA.