



TUVALU SHIP REGISTRY

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MARINE CIRCULAR

MC-7/2025/1

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FOR: Ship Owners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Recognized Organizations, Flag State Inspectors

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CODE FOR SHIPS OPERATING IN POLAR WATERS

DEFINITIONS:

The following abbreviations stand for:

- "MARPOL" – International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978
- "OICNW" – Officers in charge of a navigational watch
- "Polar Code" – The International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, as amended and corrected by Note Verbale 039 issued 30 July 2021
- "PWOM" – Polar Water Operation Manual
- "RO" – Recognized Organization as defined by IMO Resolution A.789(19)
- "SMS" – Safety Management System
- "SOLAS" – The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended
- "STCW Code" – Seafarers' Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping Code, 2011 Edition, as amended
- "STCW Convention" – International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 2011 Edition, as amended

The following term shall mean:

- "Administration" – Tuvalu Ship Registry
- "Antarctic Area" – As defined in SOLAS XIV/1.2
- "Arctic Waters" – As defined in SOLAS XIV/1.3
- "Category A ship" – A ship designed for operation in polar waters in at least medium, first-year ice, which may include old ice inclusions
- "Category B ship" – A ship not included in Category A, designed for operation in polar waters in at least thin first-year ice, which may include old ice inclusions
- "Category C ship" – A ship designed to operate in open water or in ice conditions less severe than those included in Category A or B
- "Open Water" – A large area of freely navigable water in which sea ice is present in concentrations less than 1/10. No ice of land origin is present (refer to WMO Sea Ice Nomenclature).
- "Other Waters" – Waters with more than 1/10 ice cover or with any ice of land origin.
- "Polar Waters" – Arctic waters or the Antarctic area.

REFERENCES:

- (a) International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters
- (b) IMO Circular MSC.1/Circ.1519, Guidance on methodologies for assessing operational capabilities and limitations in ice, issued 6 June 2016.

PURPOSE:

This circular provides guidance on the implementation of the Polar Code.

APPLICATION:

This circular applies to all Tuvalu-flagged ships intending to operate in polar waters.

CONTENTS:**1. Operational Assessment:**

- 1.1. Ships to which this circular applies shall undergo an operational assessment to identify ship-specific hazards and limitations in polar waters.
- 1.2. The assessment must cover structural capability, ice navigation performance, propulsion and power systems, fire safety, life-saving appliances and communication equipment.
- 1.3. Methodologies in IMO MSC.1/Circ.1519 should be applied.

2. PWOM

- 2.1. Every ship to which this circular applies shall carry a PWOM detailing operational limitations, procedures for risk mitigation, crew familiarization and guidance for emergencies.
- 2.2. PWOM must be verified by the RO before the Polar Ship Certificate is issued.

3. Polar Ship Certificate

- 3.1. All ships operating in polar waters must hold a valid Polar Ship Certificate issued by a RO.
- 3.2. This certificate shall include a Record of Equipment supplement and harmonized with the Ship's SOLAS certification cycle in accordance with SOLAS Reg. I/14.

4. Structure, Equipment and Systems

- 4.1. Ships must meet structural and equipment requirements applicable to their Polar Ship Category (A, B, or C).
- 4.2. This includes ice strengthening, heating of essential systems, enclosed lifeboats, survival craft with extended endurance, navigational equipment suitable for low visibility, and redundancy of propulsion and power systems, where required.

5. Life-Saving Appliances & Fire Safety

- 5.1. Survival craft, PPE, and communication systems must remain effective at low temperatures.
- 5.2. Enclosed lifeboats with sufficient insulation, anti-exposure suits, and fire-fighting systems suitable for cold conditions are mandatory.

6. Pollution Prevention

- 6.1. Ships must comply with MARPOL Annexes I, II, IV, and V restrictions in polar waters.
- 6.2. Discharges of oil, noxious liquid substances, sewage, and garbage are prohibited except as permitted by the Polar Code.

- 6.3. Shipboard management plans and records (Oil Record Book, Garbage Record Book, SOPEP/SMPEP) must reflect polar operations.

7. Training of Personnel

- 7.1. While operating in Polar Waters – Masters, Chief Mates, and OICNW shall be qualified in accordance with chapter V of the STCW Convention and the STCW Code, as amended, as follows:

Ice Conditions	Tankers	Passenger Ships	Others
Ice Free	Not applicable		
Open Waters	Basic training for Master, Chief Mate, and OICNW.		Not applicable
Other Waters	Advanced training for Master & Chief Mate, and Basic training for OICNW.		

- 7.2. All crew must receive familiarization training on PWOM procedures.
- 7.3. Person(s) other than the Master, Chief Mate or OICNW may be used to satisfy the requirements for training as required by sub-para 7.1. This arrangement does not relieve the Master or OICNW from their duties and obligations for the safety of the vessel.
- 7.4. Every crew member shall be made familiar with the procedures and equipment contained or referenced in the PWOM relevant to their assigned duties.

Yours sincerely,

Deputy Registrar
Tuvalu Ship Registry