



Marine Notice No. 41 of 2023

Amended 11/12/2023

Notice to all Fishing Vessel Owners, Skippers, Masters, Fishers, Mates and Engineers and all stakeholders including training colleges and fishery organisations

Regulations on Certificates of Competency for Officers Working on Board Fishing Vessels

The Department of Transport wishes to advise that new regulations entitled “*Fishing Vessels (Certification of Deck Officers and Engineer Officers) Regulations 2023*” ([S.I. No. 313 of 2023](#)), have been signed into law. These Regulations revoke and replace the *Fishing Vessels (Certification of Deck Officers and Engineer Officers) Regulations, 1988* ([S.I. No. 289 of 1988](#)) and its amending regulations.

The new regulations apply to fishers aboard fishing vessels that are 15m in length overall and over and they come into operation on 1 July 2023.

Details of the new regulations are explained below and there is a Frequently Asked Questions section set out in Appendix 4 to this Notice.

1. Certificates of Competency for Deck Officers

The new regulations continue to provide for the issuing of certificates of competency for deck officers in the classes that are currently available with **one change**: The Department will no longer issue certificates of competency for the deck officer qualification of “Second Hand (Special)” except for those fishers who have already commenced a period of training for that qualification.

Fishers who hold a Second Hand (Limited) or have commenced a period of training at the National Fishery Colleges to secure a certificate of competency which may lead to a Second Hand (Special), may complete this training, including sea service, in line with the exam directions currently in place. This must be done within 3 years of the regulations coming into force in order to be issued with a certificate of competency as Second Hand (Special). As the regulations come into effect on 1 July 2023, all training, including sea service, must be completed before 1 July 2026 to secure a certificate of competency as Second Hand (Special).

Current holders of a certificate of competency for Second Hand (Special) will continue to hold that certificate until it is submitted for renewal in accordance with the revalidation requirements described below in paragraph 4 of this Marine Notice.

A new qualification has also been provided for called “Skipper (Limited) <24m”. A fisher must meet the requirements for Second Hand (Full) before being issued with a Skipper (Limited) <24m certificate of competency.

Holders of a certificate of competency for Second Hand (Limited) who wish to obtain a qualification as Skipper (Limited) <24m are required to provide evidence of 12 months sea service and complete the written exam module in ship construction and stability, followed by an oral exam appropriate to Second Hand (Full).

The requirements for Skipper (Limited) remain the same. That is, an application may be made upon completion of 12 months sea-service whilst holding a Second Hand (Full) or Skipper (Limited) <24m and completing the required additional ancillary training, which is detailed below in paragraph 4 of this Marine Notice.

Please see the details at **Appendix 1** in relation to the revised classes of certificates of competency to be issued and their related limitations.

2. Certificates of Service

The department will no longer issue certificates of service (for both deck and engineer officers). However, all certificates of service that are currently valid will be treated as equivalent to a certificate of competency in the class deemed to be their equivalent.

Both deck and engineer officers will be able to exchange their certificates of service for an equivalent certificates of competency in accordance with the revalidation requirements described below in paragraph 4 of this Marine Notice.

3. Engineer Officers’ Qualifications

There is no change to the issuing of certificates of competency for engineer officers. However, the regulations have been updated to provide that engineer officers will be able to rely on certificates of competency that have been issued under the *European Union (Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers) Regulations, 2014* ([S.I. No. 242 of 2014](#)), which has replaced the *Merchant Shipping (Certification of Marine Engineer Officers) Regulations, 1981* (S.I. No. 12 of 1981), as an equivalent certificate. Details of classes of certificates for engineer officers are also set out in **Appendix 1**.

4. Expiry of Certificates of Competency and Revalidation

Under the new regulations, an expiration date of 5 years has been placed on all certificates of competency for fishing vessels, for both deck and engineer officers, that are issued after the regulations come into operation. Also, a certificate of competency, or a certificate of service, for either a deck or engineer officer, which is currently in force, will remain valid for a period of 5 years from the date the regulations came into operation. Therefore, as the regulations come into effect on 1 July 2023, any currently valid certificates of competency will remain valid until 1 July 2028. Any certificates of competency issued after 1 July 2023 will have a validity of 5 years from their date of issue.

The new regulations provide that all certificates of competency can be revalidated for a further period of five years, and every five years thereafter, subject to the requirement to complete updated training for the following relevant ancillary courses at intervals not exceeding five years: Personal Survival Techniques (PST), Fire Prevention and Firefighting (FPFF), and Advanced Firefighting (AFF).

Revalidation of certificates after the expiry date passes is allowed, providing the criteria for revalidation are met with respect to sea service (if any) and training.

Where a fisher has lost or misplaced their current certificate of competency, they can make an application to the Mercantile Marine Office for a replacement certificate. Details of the process to follow can be found here: <https://www.seafarers.ie/General-Information/Replacement-Certificates#603116-replacement-certificates>

5. Recognition of Certificates of Competency issued by other States

The new regulations provide for the issuing of a certificate of equivalent competency, by the Minister, for fishing-related certificates of competency that are issued by other EU Member States, including those issued in accordance with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F Convention).

For certificates of competency that are issued by non-EU Member States, including certificates issued in accordance with the STCW-F convention, a certificate of equivalent competency may also be issued, subject to appropriate standards and conditions as determined by the Minister.

6. Recognition of United Kingdom (UK) Certificates of Competency

The Regulations also provide for the revocation of the *Merchant Shipping (Recognition of British Certificates of Competency) Order, 1995* (S.I. No. 228 of 1995). Under that Order certificates of competency issued by the UK were automatically recognized for work aboard Irish fishing vessels.

The Regulations will allow for a continuation of that automatic recognition for a transitional period of three years until 1 July 2026. During that period, current holders of a UK certificate of competency will be required to apply to the Marine Survey Office (MSO) for a certificate of equivalent competency to continue working aboard an Irish fishing vessel.

This recognition will also be afforded to fishers currently in training to obtain a UK certificate of equivalent competency once that certificate is issued before 1 July 2025.

Therefore, all holders of a UK certificate of competency issued prior to 1 July 2025 are permitted to continue to work aboard Irish fishing vessels on foot of their UK certificate and have until 1 July 2026 to secure a certificate of equivalent competency to continue working aboard Irish vessels after that date.

For any UK certificate issued after 1 July 2026, the holder must first apply to the MSO for a certificate of equivalent competency before being permitted to work aboard an Irish fishing vessel.

7. Manning Requirements

Unlike the previous regulations, the new regulations do not deal with the manning requirements on board fishing vessels. The manning requirements remain the same but are set out in separate new regulations, which have come into operation at the same time as the new certification regulations being discussed in this Marine Notice. A separate Marine Notice has issued in relation to those manning requirements.

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Encl: Appendix 1 – Scope of the updated certificates of competency qualifications
Appendix 2 – Recognised equivalency for UK certificates of competency issued before 1 July 2025
Appendix 3 – Recognised equivalency for UK certificates issued after 1 July 2025
Appendix 4 – Frequently Asked Questions

For any technical assistance in relation to this Marine Notice, please contact:
The Marine Survey Office, email: MSO@transport.gov.ie
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MaritimeSafetyPolicyDivision@transport.gov.ie
Written enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to:
Dept. of Transport, Maritime Safety Policy Division, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, D02 TR60, Ireland.
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Appendix 1: Scope of the updated certificate of competency qualifications

1. Deck Officers

CERTIFICATE	SCOPE
Skipper (Full)	Skipper in all Waters
Skipper (Limited)	Skipper in Limited Area only of vessels less than 100 metres in registered length
Skipper (Limited) <24m	Skipper in vessels not exceeding 24 Metres in length in the Limited Area only
Second Hand (Full)	Deck Officer in all Waters
Second Hand (Special)	Skipper in vessels not exceeding 24 Metres in length in the Limited Area only Deck Officer in Limited Area only
Second Hand (Limited)	Deck Officer in Limited Area only

For further details, please see the [‘Exam Directions’ for FV Deck Officers.](#)

2. Engineer Officers

Description of registered power of vessel (kilowatts)	Required Classes of Certification		
	Chief Engineer Officer	Second Engineer Officer	Third Engineer Officer
Vessels powered by main propulsion machinery of 3,000 kW propulsion power or more	Class 1 FV or STCW Reg III/2 Chief Engineer	Class 2 FV or STCW Reg III/2 Second Engineer	Class 3 FV or STCW Reg III/1 Officer in charge of an engineering watch
Vessels powered by main propulsion machinery of between 750 kW and 3,000 kW propulsion power	Class 2 FV or STCW Reg III/3 Chief Engineer	Class 3 FV or STCW Reg III/1 Officer in charge of an engineering watch	n/a

For further details, please see the [‘Exam Directions’ for FV Engineer Officers.](#)

Appendix 2: Recognised equivalency for current UK certificates of competency

Current equivalency between UK certificates of competency issued prior to 1 July 2025 and Irish certificates of competency which will remain in place for applications for certificates of equivalent competency:

UK Certificate of Competency	Equivalent class of Irish Certificate
Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 1	Skipper (Full)
Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 2	Second Hand (Full)
Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 2 (Skipper <30m Limited Area)	Second Hand (Special)
Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 2, or Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 3, limited to vessels of less than 30m	Second Hand (Limited)
Engineer Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 1	Engineer Officer CoC (FV) Class 1
Second Engineer holding an Engineer Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 2	Engineer Officer CoC (FV) Class 2
No equivalent	Engineer Officer CoC (FV) Class 3

Appendix 3: Recognised equivalency for future UK certificates

Equivalency between UK certificates of competency issued after 1 July 2026 and Irish certificates of competency for applications for certificates of equivalent competency.

UK Certificate of Competency	Irish Cert. of equivalent Competency
Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 1	Skipper (Full)
Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 2 (Skipper)	Skipper (Limited) <24m
Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 2	Second Hand (Full)
Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 2, or Deck Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 3, limited to vessels of less than 30m	Second Hand (Limited)
No equivalent	Engineer Officer CoC (FV) Class 1
Engineer Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 1	Engineer Officer CoC (FV) Class 2
Second Engineer holding an Engineer Officer Certificate of Competency (Fishing Vessel) Class 2	Engineer Officer CoC (FV) Class 3

Appendix 4: Frequently Asked Questions

1. I have a valid certificate of competency, when will it expire?

If you have a valid certificate of competency that was issued before the new regulations came into force, then your certificate will expire on 1 July 2028.

2. I won't be applying for a certificate of competency until 2024, when will it expire?

A certificate of competency issued after the new legislation comes into effect will be valid for 5 years. So, for example, if you are issued with a certificate of competency on 1 April 2024, that certificate will remain valid until 1 April 2029.

3. My certificate of competency is due to expire or has expired, what do I need to do to renew it?

You need to ensure that you have completed updated training for the following courses: Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Prevention and Firefighting, and Advanced Firefighting and provide evidence of completion, along with a certificate of competency renewals application form, to the Marine Survey Office (MSO) to renew your Certificate of Competency.

4. It is more than 5 years since I completed the Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Prevention and Firefighting, and Advanced Firefighting courses, can I update the courses or do I have to do the courses again?

If it is more than 5 years since you completed the relevant ancillary training courses, you may not be permitted to do the updated training and may have to do each course in full. Details about entry to the training courses will be available from the course providers.

5. Do I have to show evidence of sea service to renew my certificate of competency?

No. However, a person must complete updated training in the following courses to renew their Certificate of Competency: Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Prevention and Firefighting, and Advanced Firefighting.

6. I have a qualification as "Second Hand (Special)", what happens when my certificate expires?

Any fisher that currently has a certificate of competency for "Second Hand (Special)" will have to apply to have their certificate renewed every 5 years to be able to continue working. After the 5-year period, the fisher will be issued with a new certificate of competency as a Second Hand (Special) once they have updated their training requirements for the following courses: Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Prevention and Firefighting, and Advanced Firefighting.

7. I have a qualification as "Second Hand (Special)", will I automatically be issued with a certificate of competency as a "Skipper Limited <24m" when my certificate of competency expires?

No. When a certificate of competency expires for the qualification of "Second Hand Special", the fisher will be issued with a new certificate of competency for "Second Hand Special". This will be on condition that the fisher has updated their training requirements for the following courses: Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Prevention and Firefighting, and Advanced Firefighting.

8. I have a qualification as “Second Hand (Special)”, what further training do I need to secure a qualification as a “Skipper Limited <24m”?

For those with a qualification as “Second Hand (Special)” to qualify as a “Skipper Limited <24m”, they must first qualify as a “Second Hand (Full)” by completing the minimum training requirements listed below at a BIM training facility:

- Stability & Construction
- Ocean & Celestial Navigation
- GMDSS General Operators Certificate
- Ancillary Courses (Personal Survival Techniques (PST), Fire Prevention and Firefighting (FPFF), and Advanced Firefighting (AFF))
- Department of Transport Oral Exam
- The Navigation Aids, Equipment and Simulation Training course at operational level (NAEST (O))

Once qualified as a “Second Hand (Full)”, has completed the appropriate training regarding Medical Care on Board and is at least 19 years of age, the fisher may then be endorsed to act as a “Skipper Limited <24m”.

9. I have a qualification as “Second Hand (Limited)”, what further training do I need to secure a qualification as a “Second Hand (Full)”?

For those with a qualification of “Second Hand (Limited)” to qualify as a “Second Hand (Full)”, they must first have at least 12 months sea service whilst holding a Second Hand (Limited) in addition to completing the minimum training requirements listed below by attending a BIM training facility:

- Stability & Construction
- Ocean & Celestial Navigation
- GMDSS General Operators Certificate
- Ancillary Courses (Personal Survival Techniques (PST), Fire Prevention and Firefighting (FPFF), and Advanced Firefighting (AFF))
- Department of Transport Oral Exam
- The Navigation Aids, Equipment and Simulation Training course at operational level (NAEST (O))

10. I have a qualification as “Second Hand (Limited)”, what further training do I need to secure a qualification as a “Skipper Limited <24m”?

Those with a qualification as “Second Hand (Limited)” must first qualify as a “Second Hand (Full)”. Once qualified as a “Second Hand (Full)”, has completed appropriate training regarding Medical Care on Board and is at least 19 years of age, a fisher can be endorsed to act as a “Skipper Limited <24m”.

11. Do the same criteria apply to “Second Hand (Limited)” and “Second Hand (Special)” that wish to qualify as “Second Hand (Full)”?

No. Evidence of 12 months sea time shall be required whilst holding a Second Hand (Limited). There is no additional sea time requirement for holders of a Second Hand (Special).

12. I have a qualification as “Second Hand (Full)”, what further training do I need to secure a qualification as a “Skipper Limited <24m” under the new regulations?

- Ancillary Courses - Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Prevention and Firefighting, and Advanced Firefighting.

- The Navigation Aids, Equipment and Simulation Training course at operational level (NAEST (O)).

Once qualified as a “Second Hand (Full)”, has completed appropriate training regarding Medical Care on Board and is at least 19 years of age, a fisher can be endorsed to act as a “Skipper Limited <24m”.

13. Do you have to qualify as Second Hand (Full) first before you can qualify as Skipper Limited <24m?

Yes. You can only be endorsed to act as a “Skipper Limited <24m” if you have qualified as a “Second Hand (Full)”, have completed a course in Medical Care on Board and are at least 19 years of age.

14. Do the same criteria apply to Skipper Limited <24m and Skipper Limited in order to qualify as a Skipper Full?

Yes. The same criteria apply. In order to qualify as a Skipper Full, a person must be at least 19 years of age and meet the following criteria at a minimum:

- Have at least 36 months at sea in a deck capacity of which 12 months must have been service not lower than second of two certified watchkeeping officers, in addition to the Skipper,
- Hold a certificate for “Second Hand Full” or a “Skipper Limited”,
- Pass an appropriate exam set by the Department of Transport,
- Be medically fit.

The full list of criteria to meet the requirements for “Skipper Full” is available on <http://www.seafarers.ie/>

15. I am a current holder of a UK issued Certificate of Competency, what do I need to do to obtain a valid Irish Certificate of competency?

As in the previous regulations, the UK Certificate will be automatically recognised for work aboard an Irish vessel but only for a transitional period of 3 years up until 1 July 2026. During these 3 years holders of a UK certificate who wish to continue working aboard Irish fishing vessels after 1 July 2026 will need to apply to the MSO for a certificate of equivalent competency.

16. I am currently in training to obtain a UK certificate of competency, will I be eligible for a certificate of equivalent competency to work aboard Irish fishing vessels?

If you obtain a UK certificate of competency before 1 July 2025, your qualification will be automatically recognised for work aboard an Irish fishing vessel. However, you must apply to the MSO for a certificate of equivalent competency before 1 July 2026.

17. I will not receive my UK certificate of competency before 1 July 2026, am I permitted to work aboard an Irish fishing vessel?

Should your UK qualification be obtained after 1 July 2026, you will need to apply to the MSO for the certificate of equivalent competency before working aboard an Irish fishing vessel as the automatic recognition period will have ended.

18. I am the holder of a UK Certificate of Competency and I didn't apply for a Certificate of Equivalent Competency within the three year transition period – what happens now?

If a holder of a UK Certificate of Competency has not applied to the MSO for a Certificate of Equivalent Competency before 1 July 2026, they are not permitted to work aboard an Irish registered vessel until such time as they apply for and are issued with a Certificate of Equivalent Competency.

19. I hold a Certificate of Competency issued by another EU Member State, is this recognised by Irish authorities?

Yes. Certificates of Competency issued by other EU Member States are recognised. The holder must apply to the MSO for a Certificate of Equivalent Competency to enable them to work aboard Irish registered vessels. The MSO may assess your qualifications and request further details to ensure that an Irish Certificate of Equivalent Competency is issued at an equivalent level to your current certificate.

20. I hold a Certificate of Competency issued by a country outside of the EU and UK, is this recognised by Irish authorities?

This will depend on the type of Certificate issued and on engagement with the issuing authority to determine the ability of the holder to work aboard an Irish fishing vessel in the capacity they wish to. Holders must first apply to the MSO for a Certificate of Equivalent Competency before they can work aboard an Irish fishing vessel.
