



NMSC Media Release

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Seven commercial vessel standards to enter national law in October 2009

The National Marine Safety Committee (NMSC) today reminded the marine industry that the next raft of national standards for commercial vessels enters legislation nationally on October 1 this year through an amendment to the USL Code (Amendment 7).

This round of reform will see six sections of the National Standard for Commercial Vessels (NSCV) come into force for new vessels. The relevant standards are:

- Construction (NSCV Part C Section 3)
- Stability Information (NSCV Part C Subsection 6A)
- Stability Tests (NSCV Part C Subsection 6C)
- Communication Equipment (NSCV Part C Subsection 7B)
- Navigation Equipment (NSCV Part C Subsection 7C)
- Anchoring Systems (NSCV Part C Subsection 7D).

A seventh section, Operational Practices (NSCV Part E), will apply to new *and* existing vessels. However, the new requirements will become compulsory for certain high-risk vessels only*.

NMSC's CEO Margie O'Tarpey explained that the USL Code was widely, although not universally, implemented by state, territory and commonwealth marine safety agencies as the standard for commercial vessels.

"This amendment provides a convenient way to replace the old USL requirements – developed nearly 30 years ago – with a much more modern and flexible set of standards," Ms O'Tarpey said.

"NMSC's charter is very much about achieving nationally uniform marine safety standards so each raft of standards adopted into law around the nation is a significant step towards reaching that goal".

For those jurisdictions that currently allow vessels to comply with the USL Code, a new vessel which submits an application prior to 1 October 2009 can be built to these existing requirements, provided construction work begins within a three-year period. However, design approvals submitted after 1 October 2009 must comply with the new standards.

"This allows a transitional period for vessel builders over the next couple of months," Ms O'Tarpey said, explaining that "the transition period applies in all jurisdictions except those which already require compliance with only the NSCV".**

"NMSC will be placing a helpful guide, entitled the Combined NSCV/USLCode 2009, on its website to allow industry around the country to understand what sections of the USL Code have been replaced by the NSCV".

NSCV C3 – Construction references Lloyds Special Service Class Rules and is a key standard for national marine safety consistency.

Industry representatives welcoming the next phase of standards entering legislation nationally include naval architect Graham Taylor.

Mr Taylor views the completion of the stability standards (**C6A – Intact Stability Requirements and C6C – Stability Tests and Information**) as another important step toward the ultimate completion of the NSCV.



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“These parts of the NSCV are a major upgrade reflecting current international standards,” Mr Taylor, who is also the Secretary of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects (RINA) Australia, said.

“They provide a consistent approach, application and terminology for all types of vessels – something that was missing from the previous USL Code.

“Gaps and lack of detail in parts previously meant that the naval architect often needed a knowledge of what was left unsaid to allow proper application – the new standards’ thorough coverage means that even the novice can confidently apply the new standards.

“This detailed, consistent approach should also ensure consistent application by all state authorities and their ready acceptance of vessels when transferring interstate,” he added.

The national standard for **Navigation equipment (NSCV C7C)** reflects the latest in marine navigational technology

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority’s AIS project manager Jillian Carson-Jackson said that Section 7C of the NSCV delivers, for the first time, a uniform national standard for nautical charts and associated navigation systems – and particularly Electronic Chart Systems scaled for vessel size and operating areas.

“Its introduction will foster improvements to navigation safety comparable to those achieved by larger vessels administered under the SOLAS Convention while recognising that the circumstances and needs of operators of smaller commercial vessels may differ,” Ms Carson-Jackson said.

Section 7C also includes carriage requirements for Automated Identification Systems (AIS)*** on certain vessels, including reference to either Class A or Class B units, depending on vessel size and area of operation.

Ms Carson-Jackson pointed out that AIS has been recognised by the IMO as a means to enhance safe navigation, “however, it will only work when vessels are transmitting, as well as receiving, the information”.

Navigation equipment supplier Coursemaster Autopilot’s Managing Director Richard Chapman agrees on the importance of a nationally uniform navigation equipment standard.

“Vessel safety and navigation is paramount and with the introduction of the new standards even safer navigation of the waterways should be achievable,” Mr Chapman said.

“This will become especially apparent with the installation of AIS transponders and receivers”.

Anchor Right’s owner/manager Rex Francis began testing his company’s anchors against the requirements of the new standard for **Anchoring equipment (NSCV C7D)** before it came into force. Anchor Right introduced a new method for pre-proof testing and field testing anchors for their development and strength.

“The benefit from my point of view is that now the commercial industry can purchase an Australian anchor design that has ticked all the boxes. To have an Australian anchor design – not just mine but all Australian anchor designs – tested in Australia to comply with the revised USL Code hand-book rules is simply great,” Mr Francis said.



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Ian Ford, Managing Director of major Sydney ferry company Bass and Flinders, said the requirements for Operational Practices (Part E) of the NSCV are a giant leap for marine safety, especially through the Safety Management System (SMS).

“Of course years ago mariners built up knowledge and experience by being around boats to know how to operate safely. We are now in a different time where the vessels are different and the operators do not have a solid background, so this national standard is all-important,” Mr Ford said.

“Just as airlines have safety check systems, Part E allows the marine industry to have an inbuilt national safety checklist so everyone around the country is able to do the right thing to operate our vessels safely”.

“I’m particularly looking forward to the time when there is a national standard so that the SMS requirements are the same between states”.

Upon effect, the seven standards will join the first raft of standards which entered legislation nationally in October 2008. Fire Safety (NSCV C4); Engineering (NSCV C5), Safety Equipment (NSCV C7A) and Fast Craft (NSCV F1) were adopted successfully last year.

Find out more

For more information on the Combined NSCV/USL Code 2009 please contact the NMSC Secretariat on 02 9247 2124 or visit website: www.nmsc.gov.au - click on ‘Legislated Standards 2009’. Copies of published standards can also be downloaded from this website.

* A vessel will only be obliged to have a Part E Safety Management System (SMS) if required by the local marine safety agency.

** For most of the design sections, jurisdictions which have already brought in the NSCV – Queensland and Tasmania – generally apply the design and construction sections in addition to the USL Code.

*** More information on AIS, including an interactive tutorial on the system, can be found at www.amsa.gov.au – look under vessel tracking and then follow the links to AIS.

The NMSC aims to achieve nationally uniform marine safety practices and is made up of an Independent Chair and the CEOs of Australia’s marine safety agencies.

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Image captions:

1. Vessel under construction. Austal/One2three 23m Queensland Police Patrol Catamaran. *Photo courtesy of Austal Tasmania.*

2. Kevin Porter, Manager of Lloyds Sydney Design Support Office delivers training on the new national Construction standard NSCV C3 in Brisbane, October 2008. *Photo courtesy Maritime Safety Queensland*

3. Anchor tested against the standard NSCV C7D. *Photo courtesy Anchor Right.*