

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF A NAVIGATIONAL WATCH

STCW Code states that the **Officer of the Watch** (OOW) is the master's representative and is primarily responsible at all times for the safe navigation of the ship and for complying with the COLREG.



PRIMARY DUTIES OF THE OOW

- **1. Watchkeeping.**

The watchkeeping duties of the OOW include maintaining a lookout and general surveillance of the ship, collision avoidance in compliance with the COLREG, recording bridge activities and making periodic checks on the navigational equipment in use. Procedures for handing over the watch and calling for support on the bridge should be in place and understood by the OOW.



PRIMARY DUTIES OF THE OOW

- **2. Navigation**

The navigational duties of the OOW are based upon the need to execute the passage plan safely, and monitor the progress of the ship against that plan.



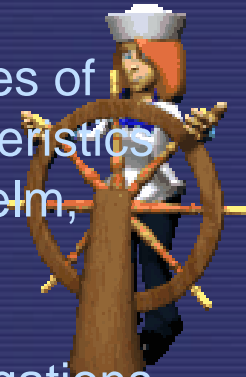
PRIMARY DUTIES OF THE OOW

- **3. Radio Communications**

With the introduction of the GMDSS, radio communications have now become important elements in the functions of the OOW, who will be responsible for maintaining a continuous radio watch at sea. During distress incidents, one of the qualified radio personnel (master and any deck officers) should be designated to have primary responsibility for radio communications. On passenger ships, that person can have no other duties during a distress situation.



The OOW needs to be conversant with means and best practices of controlling the speed and direction of the ship, handling characteristics and stopping distances. The OOW should not hesitate to use helm, engines or sound signaling apparatus at any time.

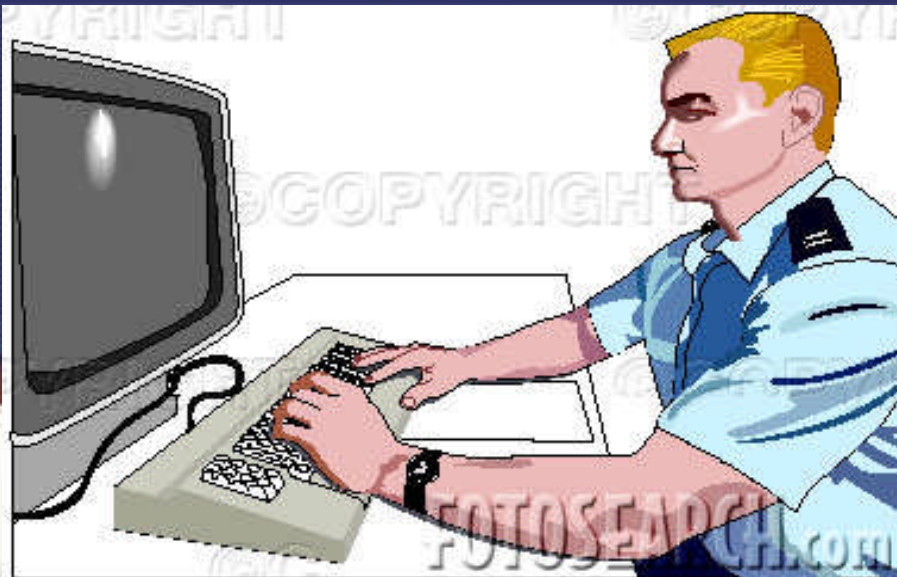


The OOW also needs to be fully conversant with shipboard obligations with regards to pollution prevention, reporting and emergency situations. The OOW should know the location of all the safety equipment on the bridge and how to operate that equipment.

The OOW should *not* leave the bridge unattended. However, in a ship with a separate chartroom, the OOW may visit that room for short periods of time to carry out necessary navigation duties after first ensuring that it is safe to do so.



The Master's appearance on the bridge *does not relieve* the OOW of his responsibilities. The officer on duty is still in charge of the watch until the Master formally takes charge. It must be made clear immediately who is in charge of the watch. To avoid any confusion, the officer on duty must assume he is in charge of the watch unless formally relieved by the master and entered in the logbook the time the Master took over the conn.

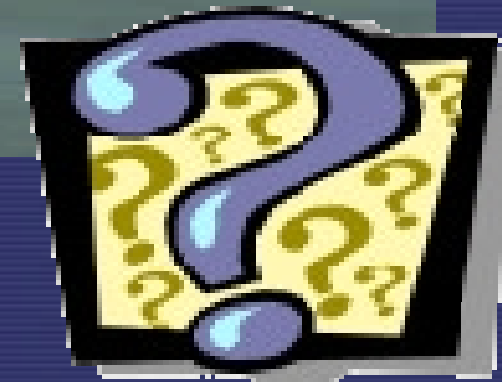


THE PRINCIPLES TO BE OBSERVED IN KEEPING A NAVIGATIONAL WATCH (NO PILOT ON BOARD)

Navigational Duties and Responsibilities

I. The OOW shall:

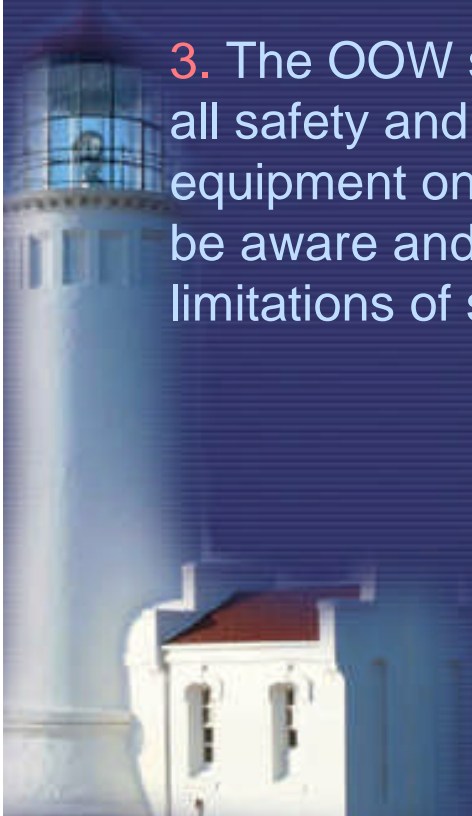
- a) keep his watch on the bridge;
- b) in no circumstances leave the bridge until properly relieved;
- c) continue to be responsible for the safe navigation of the ship, despite the presence of the master on the bridge, until the master informs him specifically that he has assumed that responsibility and this is mutually understood; and
- d) notify the master when in doubt as to what action to take in the interest of safety.



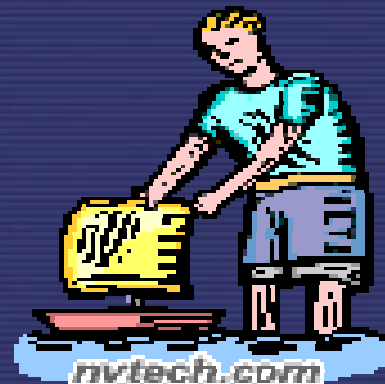


2. During the watch, the course steered, position, and speed shall be checked at sufficiently frequent intervals, using any available navigational aids necessary to ensure that the ship follows the planned course.

3. The OOW shall have full knowledge of the location and operation of all safety and navigational equipment on board the ship and shall be aware and take account of the operating limitations of such equipment.



4. The OOW shall not be assigned or undertake any duties which would interfere with the safe navigation of the ship.
5. OOWs shall make the most effective use of all navigational equipment at their disposal.
6. When using radar, the OOW shall bear in mind the necessity to comply at all times with the provisions on the use of radar contained in the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea in force.
7. In cases of need, the OOW shall not hesitate to use the helm, engines, and sound signaling apparatus. However, timely notice of intended variations of engine speed shall be given where possible or effective use made of UMS (Unmanned Machinery Space) engine controls provided on the bridge in accordance with the applicable procedures. .
8. OOWs shall know the handling characteristics of their ship including its stopping distances and should appreciate that other ships may have different handling characteristics.

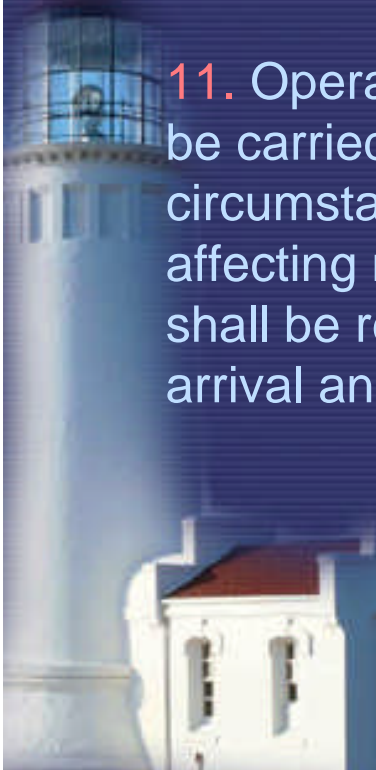
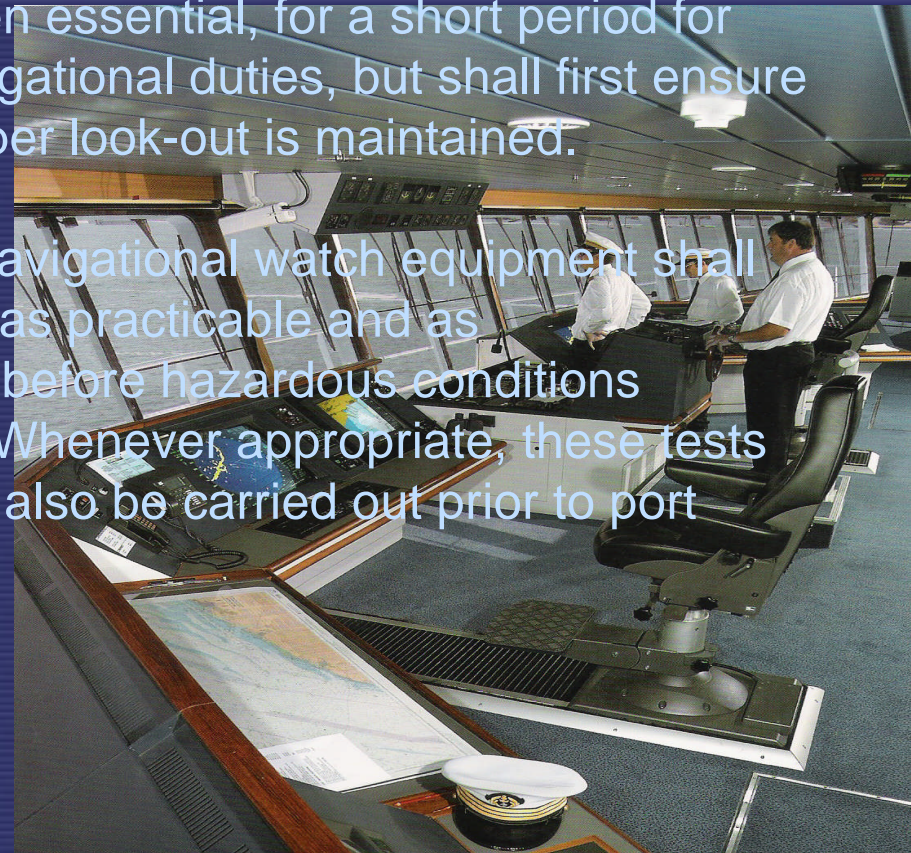


9. Proper record shall be kept during the watch of the movements and activities relating to the navigation of the ship.



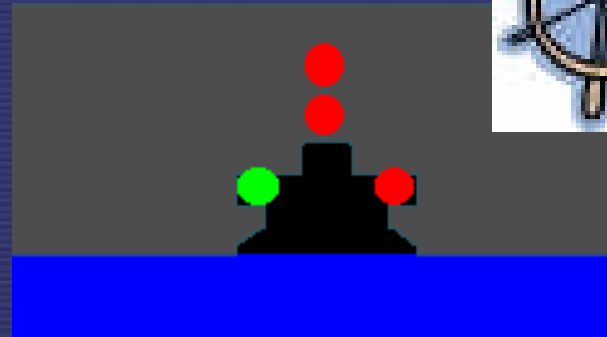
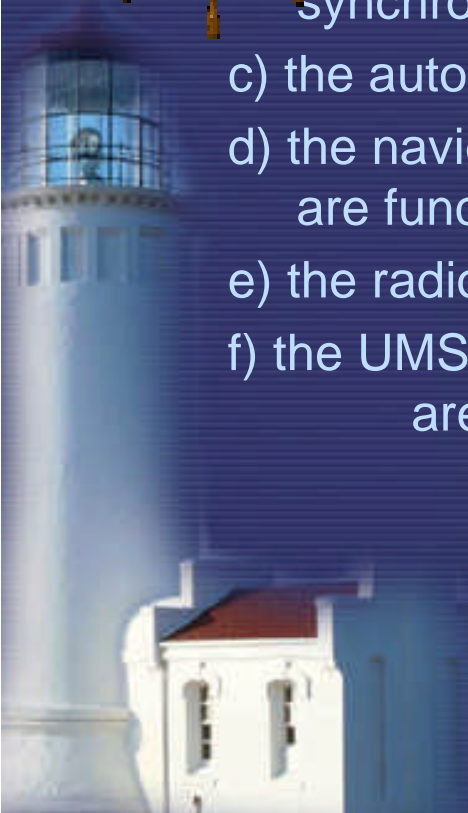
10. It is of special importance that at all times the OOW ensures that a proper look-out is maintained. In a ship with a separate chartroom, the OOW may visit the chartroom, when essential, for a short period for the necessary performance of navigational duties, but shall first ensure that it is safe to do so and that proper look-out is maintained.

11. Operational test of shipboard navigational watch equipment shall be carried out at sea as frequently as practicable and as circumstances permit, in particular before hazardous conditions affecting navigation are expected. Whenever appropriate, these tests shall be recorded. Such tests shall also be carried out prior to port arrival and departure.



12. The OOW shall make regular checks to ensure that:

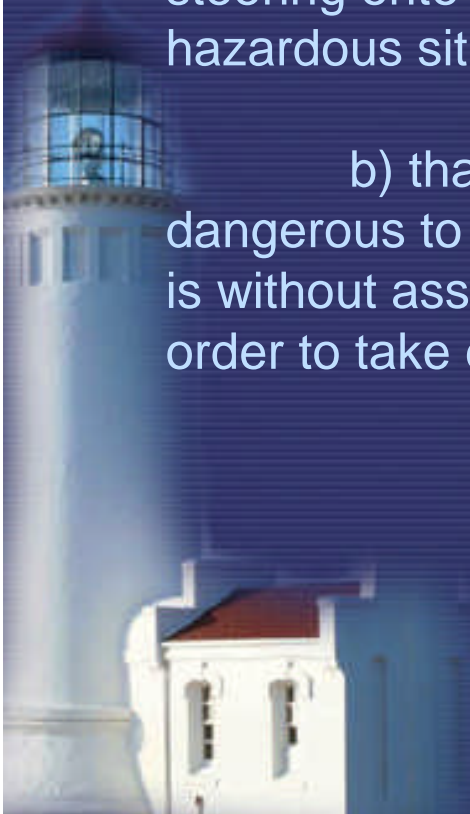
- a) the person steering the ship or the automatic pilot steering the correct course;
- b) the standard compass error is determined *least once a watch* and, when possible, major alteration of course. The standard gyro compasses are frequently compared and repeaters are synchronized with their master compass;
- c) the automatic pilot is tested manually *at least once a watch*;
- d) the navigation and signal lights and other navigational equipment are functioning properly;
- e) the radio equipment is functioning properly; and
- f) the UMS controls, alarms and indicators are functioning properly.



13. The OOW shall bear in mind the necessity to comply at all times with the requirements in force of the International Convention for Safety of Life At Sea (SOLAS), 1974. The OOW shall take into account:

a) the need to station a person to steer the ship and to put the steering onto manual control in good time to allow any potentially hazardous situation to be dealt with in a safe manner; and

b) that with a ship under automatic steering it is highly dangerous to allow a situation to develop to the point where the OOW is without assistance and has to break the continuity of the look-out in order to take emergency action.

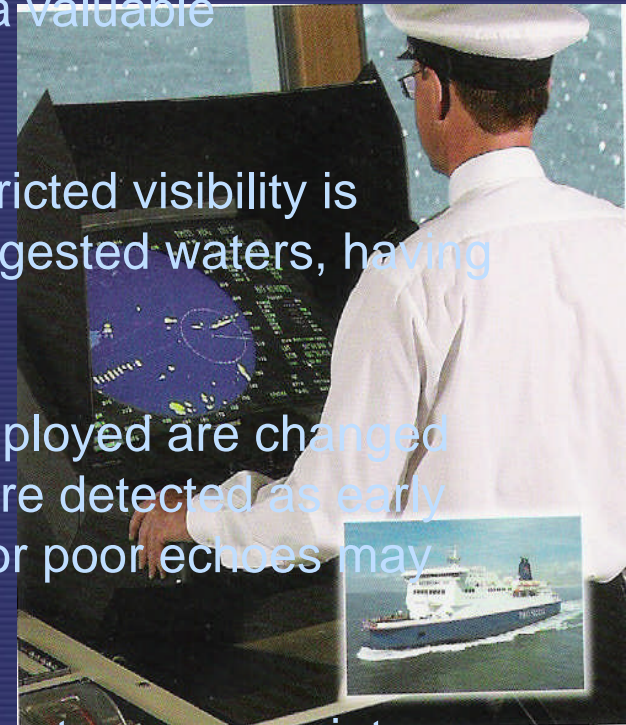


14. The OOW shall be thoroughly familiar with the use of all electronic navigational aids carried, including their capabilities and limitations, and shall use each of these aids carried, including their capabilities and limitations, and shall use each of these aids when appropriate and shall bear in mind that the **echo sounder** is a valuable navigational aid.

15. The OOW shall use the radar whenever restricted visibility is encountered or expected, and at all times in congested waters, having due regard for its limitations.

16. The OOW shall ensure that range scales employed are changed at sufficiently frequent intervals so that echoes are detected as early as possible. It shall be borne in mind that small or poor echoes may escape detection.

17. Whenever radar is in use, the OOW shall select an appropriate range scale, observes the display carefully, and shall ensure that plotting or systematic analysis is commenced in ample time.





18. The OOW shall notify the master immediately:

- a) restricted visibility
- b) heavy traffic conditions
- c) difficulty in maintaining course
- d) failure to sight land, marks or to obtain soundings by the expected time;
- e) if, unexpectedly, a land or a navigation mark is sighted or a change in sounding occurs;
- f) on breakdown of the engines, propulsion machinery remote control, steering gear or any essential navigational equipment
- g) if the radio equipment malfunctions
- h) in heavy weather; if in any doubt about the possibility of weather damage;
- i) if the ship meets any hazard to navigation, such as ice or a derelict; and
- j) in any other emergency or if in any doubt.





19. Despite the requirement to notify the master immediately in the foregoing circumstances, the OOW shall in addition not hesitate to take immediate action for the safety of the ship, where circumstances so require.

20. The OOW shall give watchkeeping personnel all appropriate instructions and information which will ensure the keeping of a safe watch, including a proper look-out.