



**REPUBLIC OF
THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

Marine Notice

No. 2-011-34

Rev. Mar/2024

**TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF
MERCHANT SHIPS, AND RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS**

SUBJECT: Special Purpose Ships

- References:**
- (a) **SOLAS**, *International Convention for the Safety at Life of Sea, Consolidated Edition, 2020*
 - (b) **IMO Resolution [A.534\(13\)](#)**, *Code of Safety for Special Purpose Ships*, adopted 17 November 1983, (1983 SPS Code), as amended by **IMO Resolution [MSC.183\(79\)](#)**, adopted 9 December, 2004 and **IMO Resolution [MSC.502\(105\)](#)**, adopted 28 April 2022
 - (c) **IMO Resolution [MSC.266\(84\)](#)**, *Code of Safety for Special Purpose Ships, 2008*, adopted 13 May 2008, (2008 SPS Code), as amended by IMO Resolution [MSC.299\(87\)](#), adopted 14 May 2010 and **IMO Resolution [MSC.503\(105\)](#)**, adopted 28 April 2022
 - (d) **RMI Marine Notice [2-011-60](#)**, *Safety Requirements for Vessels Carrying Industrial Personnel*
 - (e) **RMI Marine Notice [5-034-2](#)**, *Alternate Safety Inspection Program*

PURPOSE

This Notice provides the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) clarifications and interpretations of the *Code of Safety for Special Purpose Ships (2008 SPS Code)* and the requirements for certified cargo ships which, based on their function, are carrying “special personnel” on board.

This Notice supersedes Rev. Feb/2022. Section 2.4 has been added to address industrial personnel. In addition, footnotes have been added to §3.2.1.a and §3.2.1.b referring to the latest form of the Safety certificates under the SPS Codes.

BACKGROUND

The [2008 SPS Code](#) was developed to provide an international standard of safety for SPS of new construction. Applying this code facilitates operating SPS and provides a level of safety equivalent to that required by SOLAS for this ship type and their personnel. The 2008 SPS Code is not intended for ships used to transport and accommodate industrial personnel that are not working on board.

APPLICABILITY

The Administrator applies the [2008 SPS Code](#) to:

- A. All SPSs, irrespective of tonnage¹, carrying more than 12 special personnel, certified on or after 13 May 2008. These include:
 - 1. ships engaged in research, expeditions, and survey;
 - 2. ships for training marine personnel;
 - 3. whale and fish factory ships not engaged in catching;
 - 4. ships processing other living resources of the sea, not engaged in catching; and
 - 5. other ships with design features and operational modes similar to those (in 1 – 4 above) which in the opinion of the Administrator may be referred to this group.
- B. SPS constructed before 13 May 2008, as far as reasonable and practicable, noting that the original SPS Code (IMO Resolution [A.534\(13\)](#)) has been superseded by the [2008 SPS Code](#).
- C. Additionally, a vessel shown to meet the 2008 SPS Code, which is intended to carry 12 or less special personnel, may also be certified as a SPS to meet certain Coastal Administration requirements.

DEFINITIONS

Crew – means all persons carried on board the ship to provide navigation and maintenance of the ship, its machinery, systems, and arrangements essential for propulsion and safe navigation or to provide services for other persons on board. It does not include those persons identified as Special Personnel or Industrial Personnel.

Existing SPS – Any SPS certified or operating in SPS service prior to 13 May 2008.

Gross Tonnage – The measurement of the internal volume of spaces within the craft as defined by the International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships, 1969 (ITC).

Industrial personnel – means all persons who are transported or accommodated on board for the purpose of offshore industrial activities performed on board other ships and/or offshore facilities.

1. The [2008 SPS Code](#) applies to special purpose ships of 500 GT and above but allows an Administration to apply its provisions to those less than 500 GT and to those constructed before 13 May 2008.

Special personnel – means all persons who are not passengers or members of the crew or children under one year old 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.²

Special purpose ship – means a mechanically self-propelled ship which by reason of its function carries on board more than 12 special personnel.

REQUIREMENTS

1.0 General

- 1.1 The RMI fully recognizes the 2008 SPS Code and authorizes its use for vessels that meet the applicability criteria in construction and operation.
- 1.2 Owners or operators must arrange with the certifying Recognized Organization (RO) to confirm that their ships, before registration in the RMI, comply with the appropriate SPS Codes and are eligible to be issued SOLAS Certificates, SPS Safety Certificates, or National Documents of Compliance (NDOC).
- 1.3 Due to the often-vague operational status and service of SPSs, each proposed use of the appropriate SPS Code must be forwarded to the Administrator for consideration, along with the recommendation of the vessel's class society. Information covered in this request must include, at a minimum:
 - .1 a general arrangement plan;
 - .2 a detailed scope of operations;
 - .3 details of the 2008 SPS Code compliance; and
 - .4 a proposed manning level which details all persons onboard, including crew, special personnel, industrial personnel, and any passengers.

2.0 Compliance Requirements for New and Existing SPSs

- 2.1 All new and existing SPSs must be issued SPS Code Certificates or NDOCs. SPSs of 500 gross tonnage and above must also be issued SOLAS safety certificates (passenger or cargo ship, with exemptions as appropriate).
- 2.2 Vessels currently certificated to trade as an SPS under the old SPS Code may continue to do so, if operating within the conditions of the existing certificate until its expiration. Where reasonable and practicable, modifications may be required to bring the vessel into compliance with the operational provisions of the 2008 SPS Code at the time of the Renewal Survey.

2. Refer to the [2008 SPS Code](#) for the entire definition, noting that whenever the number of special personnel appears as a parameter, it should include the number of passengers carried on board which may not exceed 12.

- 2.3 Irrespective of build date, vessels not previously certified or operating as an SPS, but intending to do so, will be subject to the 2008 SPS Code.
- 2.4 Vessels certificated to trade as an SPS that carry more than 12 persons in addition to crew, and at least one of which is an industrial personnel, must also comply with the IP Code as per MN [2-011-60](#).

3.0 Survey and Certification Requirements

3.1 Statutory Surveys

Every SPS is subject to the survey schedule specified for cargo ships, other than tankers, as specified in [2008 SPS Code](#):

- .1 An Initial Survey is required before entering service or before an SPS Safety Certificate or NDOC is issued for the first time.
- .2 A Renewal Survey is required at intervals not exceeding five years. This is normally done in conjunction with the Special Survey required by the RO.
- .3 An Annual Survey must be performed within three months before or after each anniversary date of the Initial or Renewal Survey. On satisfactory completion of the Annual Survey, the Certificate is to be endorsed to maintain its validity.
- .4 A Periodical/Intermediate Survey must be performed within three months before or after the second anniversary date or within three months before or after the third anniversary date of the Initial or Renewal Survey, which shall take the place of one of the Annual Surveys specified above.

3.2 Certification

- .1 Vessels 500 gross tonnage and above:
 - a. New SPSs of at least 500 gross tonnage must be issued an SPS Safety Certificate³ in accordance with the certification procedures of the 2008 SPS Code.
 - b. Existing SPSs of at least 500 gross tonnage must maintain their SPS Safety Certificates⁴ which were issued in accordance with the certification procedures of the 1983 [SPS Code](#) until expiry. At Renewal Survey time, they must be issued an SPS Safety Certificate in accordance with the certification procedures of the 2008 SPS Code, where reasonable and practicable.

3. For the form of the certificate for use beginning 1 January 2024 refer to **IMO Resolution** [MSC.503\(105\)](#).

4. For the form of the certificate for use beginning 1 January 2024 refer to **IMO Resolution** [MSC.502\(105\)](#).

- c. SPSs normally engaged on international voyages⁵ must also carry SOLAS Safety Certificates with SOLAS Exemption Certificates as either a passenger ship or a cargo ship, as appropriate.

.2 Vessels less than 500 gross tonnage

SPSs of less than 500 gross tonnage will be issued a NDOC. This certificate will indicate to what extent relaxations, if any, were authorized by the Administrator, in accordance with the 2008 SPS Code.

4.0 National Safety Inspections

- 4.1 SPSs must have a RMI Annual Safety Inspection (ASI) to be completed between 30 days before or after the vessel's registration anniversary date. The inspections must be carried out by an authorized RMI Nautical Inspector unless other arrangements are discussed and specifically agreed to by the Administrator.
- 4.2 Alternatively, the ASI may be performed by the RO surveyor in conjunction with the Annual Survey in accordance with the Alternate Safety Inspection Program outlined in MN [5-034-2](#).

5. As defined by SOLAS.