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Shipping Guidance Notice – 173

Small Commercial Vessels of up to 24m in length – Consolidated Guidance

(Repeals SGN 168, SIN 063, SIN 107, SIN 107(b), SIN 107(c), & SIN 132)

To: Masters, Owners, Operators, Certifying Authorities & Builders

1. References

- Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Ship Registration) Regulations 1997
- The Workboat Code – *The safety of small workboats and pilot boats – a code of practice*
- Shipping Guidance Notice 168 – *Safety management systems for small workboats and pilot boats*
- The Sport or Pleasure Vessel Code – *The safety of small vessels in commercial use for sport or pleasure – A code of practice*
- MGN 710 (M) - *safety management systems for small workboats and pilot boats*
- MIN 698 Amendment 2 (M) Workboat Code Edition 3 – *Standards and Guidelines for Best Practice*
- Shipping Information Notice – 107(a) - *Workboat Code Edition 3 - Standards and Guidelines for Best Practice*
- Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Maritime Labour Convention) Regulations 2013
- MGN 600 (M) - *Maritime Labour Convention - Inspection of coded vessels*

Note: Above requirements and any references to same within the body of this Shipping Guidance Notice are to be taken to mean in their latest amendment and/or edition.

2. Introduction

2.1. The codes for construction and safety requirements in respect of small commercial vessels and pilot boats of up to 24m in length have evolved since the original United Kingdom's yellow, blue, brown, and red codes, seeing the advent of MGN (280) - the *Small Commercial Vessel and Pilot Boat (SCV) Code* which amalgamated the original codes, and which in itself was then partially superseded by the introduction of Workboat Code in respect of small commercial vessels and pilots boats.

2.2. Furthermore, the UK Sports & Pleasure Code came into effect on 12 December 2025 and replaces previous codes applicable to small vessels of up to 24m in length in commercial use for sport or pleasure operating at sea. The new code supersedes two of the codes encompassed under MGN 280 (namely the blue and yellow codes) and brings into effect certain changes in respect of survey and certification requirements to new and existing commercial vessels registered in Gibraltar.

2.3. The periodic distribution of information on the evolvement of the codes on part of the Gibraltar Maritime Administration has been via the publication of various related notices, and the purpose of this Shipping Guidance Notice (SGN) 173, is to consolidate and update previously published guidance and information.

3. **Application**

3.1. Small commercial vessels & pilot boats

3.1.1. Small commercial vessels and pilot boats carrying cargo and/or mot more than 12 passengers and industrial personnel intending to or registered with the Gibraltar Ship Registry, shall pursuant to the Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Ship Registration) Regulations 1997 hold valid certification issued on behalf of the Administration by one of its certifying authorities confirming compliance with the Workboat Code as applicable to the vessel, or one of its preceding codes subject to any applicable transitional requirements.

3.2. Small commercial sailing vessels and small commercial motor vessels in commercial use for sport or pleasure

3.2.1. Small commercial sailing vessels and small commercial motor vessels in use for sport or pleasure which do not carry cargo and no more than 12 passengers intending to or registered with the Gibraltar Ship Registry, shall pursuant to the Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Ship Registration) Regulations 1997 hold valid certification issued on behalf of the Administration by one of its certifying authorities confirming compliance with the UK Sports & Pleasure Code as applicable to the vessel, or one of its preceding codes subject to any applicable transitional requirements.

4. **Standards and guidelines for best practice**

4.1. The United Kingdom's Marine Information Notice (MIN) 698 provides guidance in respect of standards and guidelines, with Gibraltar Maritime Administration's SIN 107 (a) supplementing same by providing where appropriate references to Gibraltar legislation and/or requirements.

5. **Safety Management Systems - small workboats and pilot boats**

5.1. All vessels certificated under the Workboat Code shall effective 13 December 2026 implement a Safety Management System (SMS) that is proportionate to the size, complexity and risk profile of their operations.

5.2. Owners and operators can obtain guidance on the development and implementation of a SMS for small workboats and pilot boats via the United Kingdom Marine Guidance Notice (MGN) 710 (M) including practical options for providing evidence at vessel examinations. It also outlines the process for conducting periodic SMS reviews, essential towards maintaining safety, compliance, and ensuring continuous improvement.

5.3. Notwithstanding the implementation date of 13 December 2026, the Gibraltar Maritime Administration encourages Masters, managers and/or operators of Gibraltar registered small workboats and pilot boats to commence the process of developing and implementing an SMS for their respective vessels at the earliest opportunity, taking into account the guidance contained within MGN 710 (M) and its annex.

5.4. Within MGN 710 (M) the certifying Authority's role in respect of the SMS requirements is defined in as much as the certifying authority is not required to audit the SMS, but rather as part of the overall certification process sample the operator's chosen method for demonstrating SMS implementation.

5.5. Annex A provides a self-assessment that owners/operators may use to demonstrate SMS implementation.

6. **Safety Management Systems - small commercial sailing vessels and small commercial motor vessels in commercial use for sport or pleasure**

6.1. Notwithstanding section 5 above, the Gibraltar Maritime Administration additionally encourages owners of small commercial sailing vessels and small commercial motor vessels in commercial use for sport or pleasure to voluntarily develop and implement a SMS based on the guidance of MGN 710 (M).

7. **Maritime Labour Convention**

7.1. Small commercial vessels and pilot boats intending to or registered with the Gibraltar Ship Registry, and who's area of operation exceeds the limits of British Territorial Waters, are subject to compliance with the Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Maritime Labour Convention) Regulations 2013.

7.2. In respect of Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) requirements, the Gibraltar Maritime Administration (GMA) considers the application of the UK Maritime and Coast Guard Agency (MCA), Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 600 (M), as a substantial equivalence in respect of compliance with the MLC requirements, for vessels where it is not practical to comply with the full MLC standards.

7.3. Certifying Authorities are authorised to apply the requirements of the UK MCA MGN 600 (M) for Gibraltar registered vessels certified under The Workboat Code, with the exception of sections 4.2 and 4.3 of MGN 600, where the Gibraltar Maritime Administration will issue any MLC certification for Gibraltar registered vessels.

8. **Certifying Authorities**

8.1. Gibraltar Maritime Administration's certifying authorities include:

- American Bureau of Shipping (ABS)
- Bureau Veritas (BV)
- Det Norske Veritas (DNV)
- International Institute of Marine Surveying (IIMS)
- Lloyd's Register (LR)
- Marine Engineers Certifying Authority Ltd (MECAL)
- Nippon Kaiji Kyokai (Class NK)
- RINA
- The Society of Consulting Marine Engineers and Ship Surveyors (SCMS)
- Yacht Brokers, Designers & Surveyors Association (YBDSA)

Steve Gomez - Chief Surveyor
For & on behalf of the Maritime Administrator

Issue date: 12 June 2026

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