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Technical Domain / Task Number 2 TD#3

Author(s) / Submitter(s) Kevin Gregory, International Harbour Masters Association

Authenticity, validation and security of certification issued to Vessel Traffic Services personnel

# Summary

Considering the growth and subsequent accountability, expectation and public perception of VTS worldwide the authenticity of certification issued to VTS personnel is of growing importance. The capacity building work being undertaken by the IALA World Wide Academy and the IMO has resulted in an increased need for VTS training services and also the increased mobility of VTS personnel internationally.

As such, and following similar comparable issues with STCW Certification, there is a need to ensure that sufficient safeguards are in place to facilitate and ensure the authenticity, validation and security of VTS certification to safeguard the standards specified in, amongst other sources, IALA Recommendation V-103 and IALA Guideline 1014.

## Purpose of the document

The Committee is requested to consider whether there is a compelling need for the provision of additional guidance to ensure that VTS course certification and VTS Certification Logs are authentic and resistant to fraud.

## Related documents

IALA Recommendation V-103 on the Standards for Training and Certification of VTS Personnel, at section 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and Appendix 5 gives basic information on the requirements for VTS course certificates and VTS Certification Logs.

IALA Guideline 1014 on the Accreditation and Approval process for VTS Training also provides related information on the provision of documented procedure for the issue of VTS course certification.

# Background

Recognising the growth of VTS worldwide there is an increased demand for the provision of VTS training and the subsequent issuance of professional certification in all of the VTS Model Courses. Additionally, with the increased number of VTS Authorities worldwide, there is evidence of the increased mobility of VTS personnel seeking to transfer their certification between nations.

As such, there is a requirement on Competent Authorities, VTS Authorities and IALA Approved Training Organisations to ensure that any certification presented by VTS Personnel is authentic.

The issue of fraudulent certification has been reviewed by the IMO as a component of the former Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping. As such, and in the light of the continuing growth of the VTS profession, it is necessary for the processes related to the management of course certification issued by IALA Accredited Training Organisations to be reviewed. Such a review would serve to ensure that bona fide qualifications can be validated and that the risk of acceptance of certification from non IALA Accredited Training Organisations or fraudulent activities can be minimised

# Discussion

## VTS Course Certification

With the increasing number of VTS Authorities worldwide, and the further capacity building work being undertaken to support new Competent Authorities and VTS Authorities, there is an increasing demand for the provision of training in all of the VTS Model Courses.

There are an increasing number of IALA Accredited Training Organisations worldwide who have, through compliance with IALA Guideline 1014, demonstrated that they have the necessary training resources, quality and procedural management systems to design, deliver and assess approved courses of training in compliance with the relevant Model Courses.

Regretfully, there are also instances of other training organisations, who have not obtained Accredited Training Organisation status in compliance with IALA Guideline 1014, which are undertaking training activities and subsequently issuing course certification containing reference to IALA, Recommendation V-103 and the associated Model Courses.

Recognising the comprehensive nature of the accreditation and approval process within IALA Guideline 1014, there is a need to provide Competent Authorities, VTS Authorities and IALA Accredited Training Organisations who come into routine contact with VTS course certification, an increased level of certainty with regards to authenticity of a qualification.

The current guidance on the provision of VTS course certification in IALA Recommendation V-103 is brief, stating that the course certificate should include the:

* Candidates full name;
* Country in which is was awarded;
* Signature of the issuing authority and the training organisation;
* Relevant course;
* Date of award;
* Serial number of the course certificate.

Whilst all of the information is relevant, there is a need for more robust security arrangements to ensure that the status of course certification is capable of being validated by Competent Authorities, VTS Authorities and IALA Accredited Training Organisations.

## VTS Certification Log

IALA Recommendation V-103 also refers to the content and procedures for issuing a VTS Certification Log. The VTS Certification Log, in combination with VTS course certification, serves as the ‘passport’ or ‘Certificate of Competency’ for a VTS professional which may be routinely used as a mechanism for mobility within the VTS sector.

Considering the parallel issues that have been examined and addressed by the former IMO Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping, and considering the increased accountability, expectation and public perception of VTS, there is a requirement to ensure that all documentation related to a member of VTS personnel is capable of ready authentication and resistant to fraud.

Consequently, the issue of security and validation of VTS course certification cannot be considered in isolation. In particular, in order to gain a VTS Certification Log, valid and authentic VTS course certification is required. Subsequently, the VTS Certification Log remains with the member of VTS personnel for their career and may be utilised for employment purposes or for the issue of an equivalent VTS Certification log by another Competent Authority.

## Enhanced security and validation processes

Additional security arrangements may take several forms. Whilst the use of the IALA logo is currently restricted to Training Organisations whose VTS training has been Accredited and Approved in accordance with IALA Guideline 1014, there remains more that could be achieved in a reasonable manner without unduly increasing administrative burdens.

Additional steps that may be taken in enhance the security of VTS course certification and VTS Certification Logs may include:

1. The requirement, within IALA Guideline 1014, for the provision of more advanced security features embedded within VTS course certification. Such security features could include, amongst many features, a watermark, special print features, micro-text or holograms.
2. The requirement, within IALA Guideline 1014, for Competent Authorities to approve and hold sample copies of VTS course certification issued by IALA Accredited Training Organisations within their area of jurisdiction.
3. The provision, by the IALA World Wide Academy, of an IALA Accredited Training Organisation reference number to be included on all VTS course certification.
4. The maintenance of records of all VTS Certification Logs issued by Competent Authorities in a similar manner to STCW certification (noting that a VTS Certification Log would only be issued upon receipt of valid VTS course certitifation).
5. The ability, supported by IALA or the IALA World Wide Academy as appropriate, for authorised parties (Competent Authorities, VTS Authorities or IALA Accredited Training Organisations) to validate the authenticity and validity of a VTS Certification Log or VTS course certification with the relevant Competent Authority.

A sample VTS Certification issue and validation process is contained at Annex A.

# References

1. IALA Recommendation V-103 on the Standards for Training and Certification of VTS Personnel
2. IALA Guideline 1014 on the Accreditation and Approval process for VTS Training
3. IMO MSC/Circ.900 Fraudulent Certificates of Competency
4. IMO A.892(21) Unlawful practices associated with Certificates of Competency and Endorsements

# Action requested of the Committee

The Committee is requested to:

1. Instruct Working Group 3 to Review the relevant sections of IALA Recommendation V-103 and IALA Guideline 1014 with a view to providing an enhanced level of general security for VTS course certification and VTS Certification Logs.
2. Request Working Group 3 to consider whether there is a compelling need for the provision of a new Guideline, comparable with the STCW equivalent, to assist Competent Authorities, IALA Accredited Training Organisations and VTS Authorities in dealing with the authenticity and validation of Certification issued to Vessel Traffic Services Personnel.
3. vts certification workflow
4. VTS CERTIFICATION PROCESS

A VTS Certification Log should only be issued or endorsed upon receipt of VTS Course Certification from an IALA Accredited Training Organisation

Confirmation given as to the validity or authenticity of a VTS Certification Log or VTS Course Certificate

Approach made by authorised party (National Competent Authority, VTS Authority or IALA Accredited Training Organisation) to the National Competent Authority responsible for the certification in question or the IALA World Wide Academy

Advice on certificate design given in IALA Recommendation V-103 and IALA Guideline 1014

Query arises over the validity or authenticity of VTS Certification Log or VTS Course Certificate

National Competent Authority validates VTS Course Certificate and issues new (or endorses an existing) VTS Certification Log

VTS Course Certification records audited as a component of audits in accordance with IALA Guideline 1014

VTS Course Certificate issued by an IALA Accredited Training Organisation

VTS Course Certification approved by host National Competent Authority and sample copies retained

IALA Accredited Training Organisation designs secure VTS Course Certification

1. Input document number, to be assigned by the Committee Secretary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Leave open if uncertain [↑](#footnote-ref-2)