STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1981 No. 571

MERCHANT SHIPPING

SAFETY

The Merchant Shipping (Automatic Pilot and Testing of Steering Gear) Regulations 1981

Made - - - -	*8th April* 1981
Laid before Parliament	*10th April* 1981
Coming into Operation	*1st May* 1981

The Secretary of State, after consulting with the persons referred to in section 22(2) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979(a), in exercise of the powers conferred on him by subsection (1), paragraphs (*a*), (*c*), (*d*), (*e*), (*f*) and (*o*) of subsection (3), and (6)(*b*) of section 21 and by section 22(1)(*a*) and (*c*) of that Act and of all other powers enabling him in that behalf, hereby makes the following Regulations:

Citation and interpretation

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Merchant Shipping (Automatic Pilot and Testing of Steering Gear) Regulations 1981 and shall come into operation on 1st May 1981.

2. In these Regulations:

"appropriate authority", in relation to special rules, means any person empowered by law to make those special rules;

"automatic pilot" means a device for automatically operating the steering gear to steer the ship; it does not include any wind-operated self-steering equipment connected to the tiller or rudder of sailing craft;

"officer of the watch" means the person in charge of the navigational watch;

"qualified helmsman" means a person trained or sufficiently experienced to steer that type of ship;

"restricted visibility" means any condition in which visibility is restricted by fog, mist, falling snow, heavy rainstorms, sandstorms or other similar cause;

"steering gear control system" means the equipment by which orders are transmitted from the navigating bridge to the steering gear power units, and comprises transmitters, receivers, hydraulic control pumps and their associated motors, motor controllers, pipes and cables;

"steering gear power unit" means:

(*a*) in the case of electric steering gear, an electric motor and its associated electrical equipment; or

(a) 1979 c. 39.

(*b*) in the case of electro-hydraulic steering gear, an electric motor, its associated electrical equipment and connected pump; or

(*c*) in the case of other hydraulic steering gear, a driving engine and connected pump;

"United Kingdom ship" has the same meaning as in section 21(2) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979.

Application

3. These Regulations apply in relation to:

(*a*) sea-going United Kingdom ships; and

(*b*) other sea-going ships while they are within the United Kingdom or the territorial waters thereof, except in respect of the requirements of regulation 6(6)(*b*) of these Regulations:

Provided that nothing in these Regulations relating to the use of an automatic pilot shall override special rules made by an appropriate authority for roadsteads, harbours, rivers, lakes or inland waterways connected with the high seas and navigable by sea-going ships.

Use of the Automatic Pilot

4.—(1) The master shall ensure that an automatic pilot, where fitted, shall not be used in areas of high traffic density, in conditions of restricted visibility nor in any other hazardous navigational situation unless it is possible to establish manual control of the ship's steering within 30 seconds.

(2) Before entering any area of high traffic density, and whenever visibility is likely to become restricted or some other hazardous navigational situation is likely to arise, the master shall arrange, where practicable, for the officer of the watch to have available without delay the services of a qualified helmsman who shall be ready at all times to take over the manual steering.

(3) The change-over from automatic to manual steering and vice versa shall be made by, or under the supervision of, the officer of the watch, or, if there is no such officer, the master.

(4) The master shall ensure that the manual steering gear is tested (*a*) after continuous use of the automatic pilot for 24 hours and (*b*) before entering any areas where navigation demands special caution.

Operation of Steering Gear

5. In areas where navigation demands special caution, the master shall ensure that the ship shall have more than one steering gear power unit in operation when such units are available and capable of simultaneous operation.

Steering Gear—Testing and Drills

6.—(1) The master shall, within 12 hours before departure of the ship, cause the steering gear to be checked and tested so as to ensure that it is working satisfactorily:

Provided that in the case of ships regularly making more than one voyage a week to or from the same port a check and test of the steering gear need only be made once in that week unless a part of the steering gear or its control system has been dismantled or changed since the last test.

The test procedure shall include, where applicable, the operation of the following:

(*a*) the main steering gear;

(*b*) the auxiliary steering year;

(*c*) the remote steering gear control systems;

(*d*) the steering positions located on the navigating bridge;

(*e*) the emergency power supply;

(*f*) the rudder angle indicators in relation to the actual position of the rudder;

(*g*) the remote steering gear control system power failure alarms;

(*h*) the steering gear power unit failure alarms; and

(*i*) the automatic isolating arrangements and other automatic equipment required for steering gear.

(2) The checks and tests shall include:

(*a*) the full movement of the rudder according to the required capabilities of the steering gear;

(*b*) a visual inspection of the steering gear and its connecting linkage; and

(*c*) the operation of the means of communication between the navigating bridge and the steering gear compartment.

(3) The owner shall provide simple operating instructions, with a block diagram showing the changeover procedures, for the remote steering gear control systems and steering gear power units, and the master shall ensure that they are permanently displayed on the navigating bridge and in the steering gear compartment.

(4) A person shall not supervise the operation or maintenance of the steering gear unless that person is familiar with the operation of the steering systems fitted on the ship, and, where applicable, with the procedures for changing from one system to the other.

(5) In addition to the routine checks and tests prescribed in paragraphs (1) and (2) of this regulation, the master shall ensure that emergency steering gear drills which practise emergency steering gear procedures take place at least once every three months. These drills shall include, where applicable, use of direct control from within the steering gear compartment, the communications procedure with the navigating bridge and the operation of alternative power supplies.

(6) (*a*) The date time and place that the said routine checks and tests are carried out and the date and details of emergency steering drills carried out shall be recorded by the master in the official logbook.

(*b*) In ships not required to keep an official logbook, a record of each check, test and drill shall be made by the master and be retained on board for a period of six months and be available for inspection on demand by a superintendent, proper officer or surveyor of ships.

Penalties

7.—(1) A master who contravenes any provision of regulation 4, 5 or 6(1), (3) or (5) or an owner who fails to comply with regulation 6(3) shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £1,000 or, on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both.

(2) Any person who is directed to do so but fails to carry out the checks and tests required by regulation 4(4), 6(1) or (2) shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £500 or, on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or a fine or both.

(3) Any person who fails to comply with regulation 6(6)(*b*) shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £50.

Trefgarne,
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,
8th April 1981. Department of Trade.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This Note is not part of the Regulations.)

These Regulations give effect to Regulation 19 of Chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974 (Cmnd. 7874) and to Regulation 19 of the Protocol of 1978 relating to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974 (Cmnd. 7346) in respect of the use of the automatic pilot and apply to United Kingdom, and other sea-going ships while they are within the United Kingdom or the territorial waters thereof. The Regulations also prescribe requirements as to the operation, testing and drills to be carried out in respect of the steering gear, giving effect to Regulation 19–1 and 19–2 of the Protocol of 1978. The penalty for failing to record in the official logbook the entries relating to checks, tests and drills (required by regulation 6(6)(*a*)) is £50 under the Merchant Shipping (Official Logbook) Regulations 1981 (S.I. 1981/569).

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