



IHB File S3/3055

CIRCULAR LETTER 28/2013  
02 April 2013

**PROGRESS REPORT ON IHO CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF A MANDATORY CODE FOR SHIPS  
OPERATING IN POLAR WATERS (POLAR CODE)**

References:

- A. CL 07/2013 dated 21 January - *IHO Contribution to the Development of a Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters*
- B. IEC Standard 61174 - *Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS) Operational and performance requirements, methods of testing and required test results*

Dear Hydrographer,

1. The Directing Committee would like to thank the following eight Member States who replied to CL 07/2013 (Reference A): Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Peru, United Kingdom, and United States. All responses indicated support for the IHO submission on the development of a mandatory code for ships operating in polar waters, the so-called "Polar Code", to the IMO Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Equipment (DE).

**Progress at DE57**

2. The IHO submission (DE 57/1/24) was discussed at the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the DE (DE 57) which was held at the IMO Headquarters in London from 18 to 22 March. Assistant Director Wyatt represented the IHO.

3. The IHO document was introduced in plenary and received broad support from IMO Member States and Non-Governmental Organizations. The document was passed to the relevant Working Group where the proposed contents were briefly considered for inclusion in Part B of the draft "Polar Code". The Sub-Committee also decided to invite the IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) at its next session (MSC 92 - 12 to 21 June 2013) to refer the IHO document and a report of the associated discussions to the Sub-Committee for Safety of Navigation (NAV) for further consideration and expert review. If the MSC concurs, then the matter would be placed on the agenda of the next session of the NAV (NAV 59 - 2 to 6 September 2013).

4. The target completion date for the development of the "Polar Code" remains 2014. The DE proposed to progress further the drafting of the "Polar Code" with an intersessional meeting. The full report of the DE to the MSC, document DE 57/25, will be available on the IMODOCS website when issued.

**Display of ENCs at high latitudes**

5. In their responses to CL 07/2013, both the United Kingdom and the United States expressed concerns that currently neither the IMO Performance Standard for ECDIS nor the IEC test standard for ECDIS (see Reference B) demands an appropriate display of ENCs at high latitudes.

6. Based on informal discussions with IMO delegates involved in the development of the “Polar Code”, it appears unlikely that more specific details on the operation of ECDIS at high latitudes will be included in the “Polar Code”. The draft “Polar Code” (DE 57/11/6) already contains a general provision on functional requirements that should apply to the correct display of ENC’s, as follows (relevant requirements underlined by the IHB):

**9.1 Goal**

*9.1.1 The goal of this chapter is to provide for means of safe navigation.*

**9.2 Functional requirements**

*9.2.1 In order to achieve the goal set out in 9.1.1 above, the following functional requirements are embodied in the regulations of this chapter as appropriate:*

*.1 Systems for providing reference headings and position fixing shall be suitable for the intended areas.*

*.2 The navigational equipment and systems shall be designed, constructed, and installed to remain operational considering the operational limitations of the ship.*”

The IMO Performance Standard for ECDIS also includes a general requirement that “*The ENC and all updates to it should be displayed without any degradation of their information content.*”

7. However, in order to ensure that the matter is addressed specifically in future, the IHB will invite the IHO Transfer Standard and Applications Development Working Group (TSMAD) to develop a specific ENC test data set based on a high latitude scenario and provide associated guidance. This will be included as an optional test in the next edition of IHO Publication S-64 - *Test Data Set for ECDIS* currently under preparation. The new edition of the test data set, once adopted by Member States, will then become one of the normative references in IEC 61174.

**State of Hydrography in the Polar regions**

8. The Directing Committee will continue to monitor the development of the “Polar Code” at MSC 92 and NAV 59 and will take every opportunity to remind IMO delegates to give appropriate consideration to the consequences of the very poor state of hydrography in the Polar regions. Member States are invited to brief their delegation at both meetings on this issue and seek their support.

On behalf of the Directing Committee  
Yours sincerely,



Gilles Bessero  
Director