

the seating capacity of the room. While the meeting is open to the public, admittance to the State Department Building is only by means of a pre-arranged clearance list. In order to be placed on the pre-clearance list, please provide your name, title, company, social security number, date of birth, and citizenship to Shirlett Brewer at (202) 647-8345 or by fax at (202) 647-0158. All attendees must use the "C" Street entrance. One of the following valid ID's will be required for admittance: any U.S. driver's license with photo, a passport, or a U.S. Government agency ID.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Timothy C. Finton, Executive Secretary of the Committee, at (202) 647-5385 or <fintontc@ms6820wpoa.us-state.gov>.

Dated: February 1, 1999.

Timothy C. Finton,
Executive Secretary.
[FR Doc. 99-3446 Filed 2-11-99; 8:45 am]
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 2977]

Bureau of Administration; Classification Authority Acting Under the Direction of the Senior Agency Official

By virtue of the authority vested in me as the Senior Agency Official designated under Section 5.6 of the Executive Order on Classified National Security Information (EO 12958), and as Under Secretary of State for Management, I hereby authorize and direct the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Records and Publishing Services (A/RPS) to be the official to classify information on a document-by-document basis consistent with the circumstances and procedures described in section 1.8(d) of EO 12958. This authority shall be limited to information that meets the standards of the Order for classification and has not previously been disclosed to the public under proper authority. The Deputy Assistant Secretary shall act under the direction of the Under Secretary for Management and shall keep me apprised of actions taken under this authority.

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 12, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Margaret P. Grafeld, Bureau of Administration, Department of State (202-647-6620).

Dated: February 2, 1999.

Patrick F. Kennedy,
Under Secretary for Management, Acting.
[FR Doc. 99-3444 Filed 2-11-99; 8:45 am]
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Coast Guard

[USCG-1999-5080]

International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as Amended; Development of National Performance Measures for Evaluating Mariner Competence

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Request for participation; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard is seeking volunteers from members of the maritime industry and other interested persons to serve on work groups being formed by the Coast Guard's Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (MERPAC) to develop national performance measures for evaluating mariner competence. These measures will be used to facilitate implementation of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended in 1995 (STCW). In addition, the Coast Guard seeks comments on the first set of national performance measures developed, which are for basic safety training.

DATES: Requests to participate in a work group must be received by March 1, 1999. Comments regarding the basic safety training performance measures must reach the Docket Management Facility on or before March 15, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Requests to participate in a work group can be submitted in writing to Commandant (G-MSO-1), U.S. Coast Guard, Attn: LCDR George H. Burns III, 2100 Second Street SW, Washington, DC 20593-0001; by telephone 202-267-0550; by fax 202-267-4570; or, by e-mail to gurns@comdt.uscg.mil. You may mail comments regarding the basic safety training performance measures to the Docket Management Facility, [USCG-1999-5080], U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001, or deliver them to room PL-401, located on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building at the same address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The telephone number is 202-366-9329.

The Docket Management Facility maintains the public docket for this notice. Comments and documents as indicated in this preamble will become part of the docket and will be available for inspection and copying at room PL-401, located on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building at the same address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also access this docket on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

A copy of the basic safety training performance measures is available in the public docket at the above address or on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov>, or you may obtain a copy by contacting the project manager at the number in **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions on formation of the work groups please contact Lieutenant Commander George H. Burns III, Maritime Personnel Qualifications Division (G-MSO-1), telephone 202-267-0550, fax 202-267-4570, or e-mail gburns@comdt.uscg.mil. Questions regarding the basic safety training performance measures should be directed to Mr. John Bobb, Team Leader, Course Approvals, USCG National Maritime Center (NMC-4B), telephone 703-235-8457; fax 703-235-1062; or e-mail jbobb@ballston.uscg.mil. You should continue to address questions concerning the STCW Implementation Focus and Coordination Team to the Team Leader, Captain Robert L. Skewes (G-MSO), telephone 202-267-0212; fax 202-267-4570; or e-mail rskeewes@comdt.uscg.mil. Questions concerning STCW requirements and enforcement should continue to be directed to the Coast Guard National Maritime Center at (703) 235-0018. Captain William C. Bennett, e-mail wbennett@Ballston.uscg.mil, retains responsibility for administering the Mariner Licensing and Documentation Program, including STCW implementation. For questions on viewing or submitting material to the docket, contact Dorothy Walker, Chief, Dockets, Department of Transportation, telephone 202-366-9329.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background Information

In 1991, the United States became a party to STCW. The primary intent of STCW is to set minimum international qualifications for masters, officers, and watchkeeping personnel on seagoing merchant ships. STCW does not apply to mariners on inland merchant vessels, but does apply to mariners on domestic voyages if the vessel operates beyond the boundary line.

In 1993, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) began a comprehensive revision of STCW to establish more detailed standards of competence for mariners, and to address the increased awareness of human error as a major cause of maritime casualties.

On July 7, 1995, a Conference of Parties adopted a package of amendments to STCW. These amendments went into force on February 1, 1997. Currently, there are 132 parties to STCW representing almost 96 percent of the world's merchant-ship tonnage.

On March 26, 1996, the Coast Guard published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) in the **Federal Register** (61 FR 13284) on the implementation of the 1995 STCW amendments. We received over 500 comment letters in response to the NPRM and held four public meetings.

The Coast Guard published an interim rule with request for comments in the **Federal Register** on June 26, 1997 (62 FR 34506). The interim rule incorporated the 1995 STCW amendments into U.S. regulation.

The 1995 STCW Amendments require that candidates for certification must establish their competence in a wide range of subjects, depending on the function or functions they will be performing and the level of responsibility they will have on seagoing ships. The STCW amendments include standards of competence in the form of tables that identify areas of knowledge, understanding, and proficiency, which must be demonstrated, and describe general criteria for assessing whether an individual meets the standards. The interim rule, amending 46 CFR Parts 10, 12 and 15, addresses standards by requiring "practical demonstrations" in the presence of a "designated examiner."

A public listening session was held December 16, 1998 in Washington, D.C. to hear comments regarding implementation requirements for STCW. Over 80 members of the maritime and training communities attended this meeting, which had been announced in the **Federal Register** on November 23, 1998 (63 FR 64752).

Comments raised at the meeting indicated that standard performance measures for the mariner competencies listed in STCW have been difficult to determine. Several comments indicated that national work groups comprised of members of the maritime and training communities would be better able to identify and propose these measures.

Since the interim rule came into force (July 28, 1997), numerous efforts have

been initiated to establish performance measures to be used in conducting assessment of an individual's proficiency and skills. These have included efforts undertaken by individual companies and training institutions, as well as broader efforts organized by the Coast Guard's Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (MERPAC). MERPAC is an advisory committee that provides advice on matters concerning personnel in the U.S. merchant marine such as standards for training, qualifications, certification, and fitness.

MERPAC began to address the need to ensure that all seafarer demonstrations of competency are evaluated using the same minimum guidelines by developing performance measures for one specific competency within STCW: basic safety training. Documentation of basic safety training is necessary for all persons assigned shipboard duties or responsibilities. These measures establish baseline criteria for use in conducting assessments of the required practical demonstrations in the four areas of basic safety training: personal survival techniques, fire prevention and fire fighting, elementary first aid, and personal safety and social responsibility. MERPAC has recommended that the Coast Guard adopt these performance measures for use in the assessment of practical demonstrations. See **ADDRESSES** for a copy of the measures.

Formation of Work Groups

Individuals and organizations involved in developing the performance measures for basic safety training have suggested that the development of these measures for all of the essential competencies identified in STCW is a daunting task. They have suggested that this work could be accomplished much more efficiently if it were shared among those parties interested in ensuring that the STCW requirements are implemented properly in the United States.

In response to these suggestions, the Coast Guard is establishing a network of work groups under MERPAC to carry out the basic work of developing performance measures. These work groups will focus on specific competencies under STCW, with the aim of generating draft national performance measures for further consideration by the industry and the public. The Coast Guard will coordinate these work groups by identifying participants for each group, by suggesting areas of focus, and by providing guidance to promote consistency in the work.

The work groups will develop performance measures for each of the competencies identified in the STCW Convention. These competencies, shown in the order currently considered to be most critical to timely implementation of the Convention, are:

1. Basic Safety Training.
2. Ratings, Navigation Watch.
3. Ratings, Engineering Watch.
4. Officer in Charge (OINC) Navigation Watch > 500GRT.
5. Bridge Teamwork Procedures and Resource Training.
6. OINC Engineering Watch, Manned Engine Room.
7. Designated Duty Engineer, Periodically Manned Engine Room.
8. All Licensed and Unlicensed Competencies; Offshore Supply Industry.
9. OINC Navigation Watch/Master < 500 GRT, Near Coastal.
10. Master and Chief Mate > 500 GRT.
11. Chief and Second Engineer > 3000 KW.
12. All Medical Care & First Aid Training.
13. GMDSS Radio Maintainer and Restricted Operator.
14. All Survival & Rescue Boat Training.
15. Training for roll-on roll-off vessels: Master, Officers, Ratings.
16. Tanker Training: Master, Officers, Ratings.
17. Advanced Fire-Fighting Training.
18. GMDSS Radio Operator.

The work groups will be assembled and will start work immediately following the closing date of March 1, 1999. Each interested party should provide the following information to the point of contact listed in **ADDRESSES**: name, address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail address, and work group(s) on which he or she would like to participate. Interested parties may participate on more than one work group, provided they are able to meet work group scheduling commitments. The size of each work group may be limited as needed to ensure that the groups remain manageable. Most business of the work groups should be conducted electronically or via mail; however, in cases where face-to-face meetings are feasible, these are welcome as well. Work group members will not be compensated for travel nor time related to work group activity.

Adoption of Performance Measures

The proposed performance measures developed by the work groups will be reviewed by MERPAC and then forwarded to the Coast Guard with their recommendations. The criteria will then be published by the Coast Guard in the

Federal Register for general comment, to allow people and organizations that did not participate on the work group to offer comments on the proposals.

Following review of the public comments, the Coast Guard will establish final measures and publish them for general use by training providers in developing and providing courses and programs. The National Maritime Center will consider alternative measures, but will use those adopted by the Coast Guard as accepted minimum performance measures.

Request for Comments on Basic Safety Training

The performance measures for basic safety training were developed by a work group comprised of members of the training and industry community, and were recommended to the Coast Guard for consideration by MERPAC. The Coast Guard now seeks public comment, written data, views or arguments regarding these measures before they are published for general use by the maritime community. Persons submitting comments should include their names and address, identify this notice [USCG-1999-5080] and the specific section of the document to which each comment or question applies, and give the reason for each comment. Please submit all comments and attachments in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing to the Document Management Facility at the address under **ADDRESSES**. Persons wanting acknowledgement of receipt of comments should enclose stamped self-addressed postcards or envelopes. The Coast Guard will consider all comments received during the comment period.

Dated: February 8, 1999.

Joseph J. Angelo,

Acting Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety and Environmental Protection.

[FR Doc. 99-3421 Filed 2-11-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-15-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

[FHWA Docket No. FHWA-98-4743]

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century; Project Selection/Fund Allocation for the Indian Reservation Bridge Program

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: Section 1115 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st

Century establishes a nationwide priority program for improving deficient Indian reservation road (IRR) bridges and reserves \$13 million of IRR funds per year to replace and rehabilitate bridges that are in poor condition. The FHWA, Federal Lands Highway Office (FLHO), and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Division of Transportation (BIADOT), intend to implement the IRR bridge program (IRRB) to promptly address the deficient IRR bridges. Toward that end, the FLHO and the BIADOT, in consultation with Indian tribal governments, will develop project selection/fund allocation procedures for uniform application of the legislation. The FHWA is announcing its intention to solicit comments on project selection/fund allocation procedures for the IRRBP in written format and through informal consultation with Indian tribal governments and other interested parties. After a series of informal consultation sessions and following review of written comments filed in response to this notice, the FHWA will develop project selection/fund allocation procedures.

DATES: Written comments must be received on or before March 15, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Your signed, written comments must refer to the docket number appearing at the top of this document and you must submit your comments to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001. All comments will be available for examination at the above address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Those desiring notification of receipt of comments must include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or postcard.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Wade F. Casey, Federal Lands Highway Office, HFL-20, (202) 366-9486; or Ms. Grace Reidy, Office of Chief Counsel, HCC-32, (202) 366-6226; Federal Highway Administration, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, D.C. 20590. Office hours are from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

Internet users can access all comments received by the U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, by using the universal resource locator (URL): <http://dms.dot.gov>. It is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. Please follow the instructions online for more information and help.

An electronic copy of this document may be downloaded by using a modem and suitable communications software from the Government Printing Office's Electronic Bulletin Board Service at (202) 512-1661. Internet users may reach the **Federal Register's** home page at: <http://www.nara.gov/fedreg> and the Government Printing Office's database at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara>.

Background

In order to implement the IRRBP established in section 1115 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), Pub. L. 105-178, 112 Stat 107, to be codified at 23 U.S.C. 202(d)(4)(A), and in order to promptly address the deficient IRR bridges, project selection/fund allocation procedures will be developed. The FHWA is soliciting comments in writing and at a series of informal consultation sessions with Indian tribal governments and other interested parties to develop procedures for this program. Both written and oral comments will be considered and included in the docket. Following consultation and the review of written comments, the FHWA intends to develop through appropriate administrative processes project selection/fund allocation procedures by which to operate the IRRBP.

Statutory Provisions: Section 1115 of TEA-21, amended title 23, U.S.C., to require the Secretary to establish a nationwide priority program for improving deficient IRR bridges. Of the amounts authorized to be appropriated for IRRs for each fiscal year 1998 through 2003, section 1115 requires the Secretary, in cooperation with the Secretary of the Interior, to reserve not less than \$13 million for projects to replace, rehabilitate, seismically retrofit, paint, apply calcium magnesium acetate to, apply sodium acetate/formate or other environmentally acceptable, minimally corrosive anti-icing and de-icing compositions, or install scour countermeasures for deficient IRR bridges, including multiple-pipe culverts.

The statute provides that, to be eligible to receive funding under the Nationwide Priority Bridge Program, a bridge must: (i) have an opening of 20 feet or more; (ii) be on an IRR; (iii) be unsafe because of structural deficiencies, physical deterioration, or functional obsolescence; and (iv) be recorded in the national bridge inventory (NBI) administered by the Secretary under 23 U.S.C. 144 (b). The statute further provides that the funds to carry out IRR bridge projects shall be made available only on approval of