

VISION AND HEARING STANDARDS

1. VISION REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSED OR CERTIFICATED DECK PERSONNEL

- a. Applicants for any deck officer license or qualified deck rating should demonstrate that they have correctable vision to at least 20/40 in each eye and uncorrected vision of at least 20/200 in each eye¹. Applicants for STCW endorsements should meet the same standards. In all cases, the horizontal field of vision should be not less than 100 degrees in each eye. Waivers are not normally granted to an applicant whose corrected vision in the better eye is not at least 20/40. Additional waiver information is contained in paragraph 4 below. *See* 46 CFR 10.205(d)(2) & (d)(4).
- b. These applicants must demonstrate that they have a normal color sense when tested by the 14 plate (which replaces the obsolete 16 plate), 24 plate, or 38 plate Ishihara pseudoisochromatic plates tests, Farnsworth Lantern, or an alternative test approved by the NMC. The use of color sensing lenses to assist these applicants with passing the color vision test is prohibited by 46 CFR 10.205(d)(2). Any questions about acceptable color sense testing methodologies should be directed to the NMC. *See* 46 CFR 10.205(d)(2).

2. VISION REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSED OR CERTIFICATED ENGINEERING PERSONNEL, TANKERMAN, OFFSHORE INSTALLATION MANAGER, BARGE SUPERVISOR, BALLAST CONTROL OFFICER AND RADIO OFFICER

- a. Applicants for any engineering officer license, qualified engineering rating, offshore installation manager, barge supervisor, ballast control officer, radio officer, or tankerman endorsement should demonstrate that they have correctable vision of at least 20/50 in each eye and uncorrected vision of at least 20/200 in each eye². Applicants for STCW endorsements as RFPEW, or for any STCW engineering officer endorsement, should meet the same standards. The horizontal field of vision should be not less than 100 degrees in each eye. Waivers are not normally granted to an applicant whose corrected vision in the better eye is not at least 20/50. Additional waiver information is contained in paragraph 4 below. *See* 46 CFR 10.205(d)(3) & (d)(4).
- b. These applicants are only required to demonstrate that they can distinguish between the colors red, blue, green, and yellow. They may do so by passing the 14 plate (which

¹ The Coast Guard has proposed changing its current vision standards currently in 46 CFR 10.205(b). The proposed change would require that applicants meet the current vision acuity standard (20/40 corrected vision, 20/200 uncorrected vision) in one eye only rather than both eyes. *See* 72 FR 3605, 3656 (Jan. 2007) Proposed 46 CFR 10.215(b)(1) would require: "An applicant must have correctable vision to at least 20/40 in one eye and uncorrected vision of at least 20/200 in the same eye." If proposed 46 CFR 10.215(b)(1) becomes a final, effective rule, these vision standards would become the vision standards for this document at that time.

² The Coast Guard has proposed changing its vision standards currently in 46 CFR 10.205(b). The proposed change would require that applicants meet the current vision acuity standard (20/50 corrected vision, 20/200 uncorrected vision) in one eye only rather than both eyes. *See* 72 FR 3605, 3656 (Jan. 2007). Proposed 46 CFR 10.215(b)(2) would require: "An applicant must have correctable vision to at least 20/50 in one eye and uncorrected vision of at least 20/200 in the same eye . . ." If proposed 46 CFR 10.215(b)(2) becomes a final, effective rule, these vision standards would become the vision standards for this document at that time.

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replaces the obsolete 16 plate), 24 plate, or 38 plate Ishihara pseudoisochromatic plates tests, Farnsworth Lantern, or an alternative test approved by the NMC. Any questions about acceptable color-sense testing methodologies should be directed to the NMC. *See* 46 CFR 10.205(d)(3).

3. GREAT LAKES PILOTS VISION STANDARDS

The vision standards for an applicant for original registration and for registered pilots are contained in 46 CFR 402.210(c). An applicant for original registration must have a visual acuity either with or without glasses of at least 20/20 vision in one eye and at least 20/40 in the other. An applicant who wears glasses or contact lenses must also pass a test without glasses or lens of at least 20/40 in one eye and at least 20/70 in the other.

Registered pilots, however, must have either with or without glasses or lens visual acuity of at least 20/30 in one eye and at least 20/50 in the other. A Registered Pilot who wears glasses or lens must also pass a test without glasses or lens of at least 20/50 in one eye and at least 20/100 in the other. The color sense of original applicants and Registered Pilots shall be tested by a pseudoisochromatic plate test. Passage of the Williams lantern test or its equivalent is an acceptable substitute for a pseudoisochromatic plate test. *See* 46 CFR 402.210(c).

4. WAIVERS OF VISION REQUIREMENTS

- a. Applicants for any credential (original, renewal, or raise in grade) with compensated monocular vision may be granted a waiver by the NMC provided the vision in the applicant's remaining eye is correctable to the applicable standards in either section 1 or 2 above. An applicant for an original credential should also provide evidence of the ability to compensate for the lack of stereo vision through a report from an ophthalmologist and attestations of the applicant's ability from employers or co-workers. Generally, waivers for monocular vision are not granted until the applicant has been subject to monocular vision for at least 180 days.
- b. Applicants with uncorrected vision of up to 20/800 may be granted a waiver by the Coast Guard provided that the corrected vision meets the applicable standards set forth in paragraph 1 or 2 above. The waiver endorsement should include a requirement that the applicant carry spare corrective lenses and wear the corrective lenses when acting under the authority of the credential.
- c. Applicants for Able Seaman (AB) endorsement who cannot demonstrate normal color vision by passing the 14 plate, 24 plate, or 38 plate Ishihara pseudoisochromatic plates tests, Farnsworth Lantern, or an alternative test approved by the NMC, but who are otherwise qualified for AB in all respects, may be issued an MMD endorsed as boatswain. The term "boatswain" is defined in 46 CFR 10.103. It is a non-watchstanding, non-navigating position.

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- d. Applicants for deck officer licenses who cannot pass the color vision tests may be considered for a waiver by the NMC for issuance of a license limited to daylight hours only.
- e. Waivers are not normally granted for conditions that accelerate the normal decline in vision from aging.

5. HEARING STANDARDS

- a. Applicants for any credential (original, renewal or raise in grade) should have adequate hearing.
- b. If the examining medical practitioner has concerns regarding the applicant's ability to adequately hear, the examining medical practitioner should refer the applicant to an audiologist or other hearing specialist to conduct an audiometer test and/or a speech discrimination test. Applicants should advise medical practitioners of any auditory concerns that they are aware of at the time of the medical examination, and they may submit the results of hearing tests conducted prior to the medical examination as long as the test results will be no more than 12 months old on the date of credential application. The documented results of the test(s) should be provided to the examining medical practitioner for review and attached to the completed credential application.
- c. The audiometer test should include testing at the following thresholds: 500 Hz; 1,000 Hz; 2,000 Hz; and 3,000 Hz. The frequency responses for each ear are averaged to determine the measure of an applicant's hearing ability. Applicants should demonstrate an unaided threshold of 30 decibels or less in their best ear. If the applicant only has hearing in one ear, the unaided threshold should be 30 decibels or less in that ear.
- d. The functional speech discrimination test is carried out at a level of 55 decibels. For issuance of an original license, qualification, or certificate the applicant should demonstrate functional speech discrimination of at least 90%. For renewal or raise in grade of any credential, the applicant should demonstrate functional speech discrimination of at least 80%. An applicant who is unable to meet the standards of the audiometer test, but who can pass the functional speech discrimination test, may be eligible for a waiver.
- e. A hearing aid may be used by applicants for an original, renewal, or upgrade of any credential. When a hearing aid is used, the aided threshold should be at least 20 decibels in each ear and functional speech discrimination should be at least 90% at 55 decibels. An applicant who requires the use of a hearing aid to meet the hearing standards should have a notation of that fact on his or her credential(s) along with a requirement that spare batteries are to be available, and that the applicant must use the hearing aid in an operational mode while acting under the authority of the credential.