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Regulation amending the Regulations on safety measures for ships operating in polar waters and the Regulations on supervision and certificates for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units

The Norwegian Maritime Authority (NMA) has adopted amendments to the Regulations of 23 November 2016 No. 1363 on safety measures for ships operating in polar waters and the Regulations of 22 December 2014 No. 1893 on supervision and certificates for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units.

Consultation
The draft Regulation was circulated for public consultation on 28 August 2025, with a deadline for comments of 28 November 2025. The NMA received 10 responses. The consultation matrix (available in Norwegian only) contains an overview of these responses, together with the NMA's remarks.

I. General

1. Summary of the amendments

New requirements relating to navigational safety and voyage planning for "non-SOLAS ships"
The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS) concerning safety measures for ships operating in polar waters and the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code)[1] have until now applied to ships required to be certified in accordance with SOLAS chapter I. For Norwegian ships, this includes ships holding a Passenger Ship Safety Certificate and ships holding a Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate and a Cargo Ship Safety Equipment Certificate.[2]

For ships holding international safety certificates pursuant to SOLAS chapter I, there are no substantive changes.

The amendments to SOLAS chapter XIV and the Polar Code introduce new requirements relating to navigational safety and voyage planning in polar waters for a different category of ships, referred to by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as "non-SOLAS ships":

- fishing vessels of 24 metres in length and upwards;
- ships of 300 gross tonnage and upwards not used for commercial purposes;
- cargo ships of 300 gross tonnage and upwards, but below 500 gross tonnage.

Ships constructed before 1 January 2026, both those already operating in polar waters and those that will commence operations in polar waters after that date, are subject to a transitional period of one year. These ships must comply with the new requirements for voyages in polar waters no later than 1 January 2027, cf. new regulation 2.3 of SOLAS Chapter XIV. Ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026 must comply with the requirements from the date of entry into force.

The amendments to the Regulations on safety measures for ships operating in polar waters implement in Norwegian legislation the mentioned amendments to SOLAS Chapter XIV and the Polar Code, as adopted in the attached IMO resolutions MSC.532(107) and MSC.538(107). In addition, the Regulations contain

[1] MSC.385(94)
[2] Cf. Regulations of 22 December 2014 No. 1893 on supervision and certificates for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units sections 6 and 8.

certain supplementary provisions based on national assessments, such as the extension of the geographical scope of application to include polar parts of the territorial waters around Svalbard and Jan Mayen.

The amendments to SOLAS and the Polar Code are implemented primarily through incorporation. With regard to SOLAS Chapter XIV, the references specifying which parts of the Polar Code apply to ships holding international safety certificates, and which parts apply to ships referred to by the IMO as "non-SOLAS ships", are implemented through transformation, cf. sections 3 and 4 first paragraph of the Regulations. Apart from this, SOLAS Chapter XIV is incorporated in full, and the Regulations otherwise contain supplementary provisions. The Polar Code is incorporated through the two mentioned provisions in sections 3 and 4 first paragraph.

Incorporation is the method predominantly used in other regulations implementing SOLAS and MARPOL (International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships) and is therefore a familiar approach. This structure is also considered the most user-friendly based on the provisions of SOLAS Chapter XIV, as it clearly identifies which requirements apply to which ships, and which rules are supplementary.

The IMO publishes a consolidated version of SOLAS, with a new updated edition every four years. The most recent edition is from 2024 and includes all amendments with an entry-into-force date no later than 1 July 2024. For amendments that have entered into force or will enter into force after this date, including the amendments adopted by IMO resolutions MSC.532(107) and MSC.538(107), which are the subject of these regulatory amendments, reference is made to the IMO website: https://www.imo.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/IndexofIMOResolutions/Pages/MSC.aspx

In addition, minor amendments are made to the Regulations on supervision and certificates for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units (Certification Regulations) to enable ships that will be operating in polar waters and are not required to hold an International Polar Ship Certificate to document compliance with the requirements. This is to be evidenced by an endorsement in the ship's trading certificate. Such an endorsement can, in most cases, be obtained following a survey when the ship is already calling at port.

Navigational equipment and radio communication equipment required under the Polar Code must be wheel-marked in accordance with the Regulations of 30 August 2016 No. 1042 on marine equipment.

It should also be noted that any existing exemptions granted from the current requirements for navigational aids or radio communication equipment do not cover equipment that is required under the new rules relating to operations in polar waters.

2. Legal basis, scope of application and duty holders

Legal basis
The Regulations are adopted pursuant to the Act of 16 February 2007 No. 9 relating to ship safety and security (Ship Safety and Security Act).

Scope of application
The Regulations apply to the following categories of ships when operating in polar waters:

- fishing vessels of of 24 metres in length and upwards;
- ships not engaged in trade[3] and of 300 gross tonnage and upwards;
- cargo ships of 300 gross tonnage and upwards, but less than 500 gross tonnage.

[3] The English term used in SOLAS Chapter XIV is "pleasure yachts […] not engaged in trade", cf. regulation 2.1.3. This corresponds to the category of ships referred to in the Ship Safety and Security Act as "ships not used for commercial purposes", cf. section 2, first paragraph, of the Act, which in turn is the category referred to as "recreational craft" in certain regulations. Under the regulations issued by the Norwegian Maritime Authority, a ship will no longer be regarded as a recreational craft if it is used in commercial activities, i.e. If it is "engaged in trade".

Polar waters mean the Arctic waters and the Antarctic area as defined in SOLAS chapter XIV, regulations 1.2 and 1.3, cf. regulation 1.4.

Under the Regulations of 30 June 2015 No. 823 on the tonnage measurement of ships and mobile offshore units, section 3, Norwegian ships of 15 metres in overall length and upwards shall hold a tonnage certificate. Norwegian ships of 15 metres in overall length and upwards, but of less than 24 metres in length (L), have their gross tonnage calculated in accordance with national tonnage measurement rules. Larger ships have their gross tonnage calculated in accordance with the international tonnage measurement rules laid down in the International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships, 1969 (the Tonnage Convention), which applies only to ships of 24 metres in length (L) and upwards. Where reference is made to a ship's gross tonnage within the scope provision, this encompasses both gross tonnage calculated in accordance with national rules and gross tonnage calculated in accordance with the Tonnage Convention.

The Regulations on the tonnage measurement of ships and mobile offshore units do not apply to ships of less than 24 metres in overall length used for non-commercial purposes or only complying with the Regulations on vessels of less than 24 metres carrying 12 passengers or less, cf. section 1 of the Regulations on tonnage measurement of ships and mobile offshore units. This means that there is no requirement to calculate gross tonnage for these ships, regardless of what the tonnage would have been under any national or international tonnage measurement rules. Some of these ships may nevertheless have been assigned a gross tonnage due to previous or parallel activity. However, this is based on incidental circumstances. Such ships are therefore not considered to fall within the scope of these Regulations.

Duty holders

New paragraph 11-1.3 of the Polar Code clarifies that the master has a duty to plan the voyage and to take into account the conditions specified in points 1 to 9.

The company's general duties are otherwise set out in section 6, first and second paragraphs, of the Ship Safety and Security Act:

The company has an overall duty to see to that the construction and operation of the ship is in accordance with the rules laid down in or pursuant to this Act, including that the master and other persons working on board comply with the legislation.

The company shall ensure that the statutory requirements are fulfilled, except for cases when the master by law is given an independent duty to ensure this. The company shall take steps to ensure that all the persons working on board have the opportunity to fulfil their obligations under the law.

The company's duty to establish, implement and further develop a safety management system pursuant to section 7 of the Ship Safety and Security Act is also relevant:

The master's independent duties are set out in the individual chapters of the Ship Safety and Security Act. The same applies to duty of cooperation for the master and other persons working on board.

II. Details of the amendments

General comments on the amendments to the Regulations on safety measures for ships operating in polar waters

The substantive amendments are limited to incorporating requirements related to navigational aids and voyage planning for the ships described in section 1 (c) to (e). In addition, certain editorial adjustments and clarifications have been made, which overall mean that little remains of the original regulatory text. It was therefore considered most appropriate to replace the majority of the regulatory text with a new text, rather than specifying for each individual provision which wording was to be amended, repealed or moved. Only the original provision specifying when the Regulations first entered into force remains

identical in the new regulatory text- It was further considered appropriate to issue an amending regulation rather than adopt a completely new regulation, as the substantive changes to the Regulations are limited.

To section 1 Scope of application

First paragraph:
The amendments to (a) and (b) are editorial only. It is clarified that the term "passenger ships and cargo ships holding international safety certificates" refers to ships holding a Passenger Ship Safety Certificate, and ships holding a Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate and a Cargo Ship Safety Equipment Certificate.

The reference to a "Passenger Ship Safety Certificate", cf. section 6 of the Regulations of 22 December 2014 No. 1893 on supervision and certificates for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units (Certification Regulations), does not include a "Passenger Ship Safety Certificate for ships engaged", cf. section 18 of the Certification Regulations, nor a "Passenger Ship Safety Certificate for passenger ships in the territorial waters surrounding Svalbard", cf. section 21a of the Certification Regulations[4]. Safety certificates for high-speed craft are likewise not within the scope of application[5]. Nor does the scope include ships that are only required to hold a Radio Safety Certificate.

The scope of application of the Regulations has furthermore been extended to include the ship categories referred to in subparagraphs (c), (d) and (e), which correspond to the ship groups covered by the amendments to SOLAS Chapter XIV and the Polar Code.

Second paragraph:
The second paragraph of sections 2 and 3 previously provided that SOLAS Chapter XIV and the Polar Code also applied to "State-owned ships with international safety certificates". The purpose of this provision was to clarify that the Regulations also applied to such ships, notwithstanding the fact that the Convention text itself, cf. SOLAS Chapter XIV, regulation 2.4, contains an exemption for ships owned or operated by a State and used, for the time being, solely on non-commercial governmental service.

In the revised regulatory text, this has been formulated differently, as set out in new section 1, second paragraph, since it is only necessary to expressly include those ships that are exempt under SOLAS. State-owned ships other than those used, for the time being, solely on non-commercial governmental service, are not exempt under SOLAS Chapter XIV and are therefore already covered by the first paragraph of this section. Furthermore, the exemption under SOLAS applies to both State-owned ships and ships that are merely operated by a State. This is made explicit in the revised text.

It is further clarified that, in this context, ships owned or operated by the State do not include ships belonging to, or used in the service of, the Norwegian Armed Forces. The Norwegian Maritime Authority has not been delegated authority to lay down safety regulations for such ships.[6]

To section 2 SOLAS chapter XIV
New section 2 likewise implements SOLAS Chapter XIV. However, a reference has been added to IMO Resolution MSC.532(107), which contains the amendments to SOLAS Chapter XIV that are hereby implemented into Norwegian legislation through the present regulatory amendments.

[4]For passenger ships that do not hold a Passenger Ship Safety Certificate, see chapter 4 section 18 on safety measures in polar waters in the Regulations of 7 June 2019 No. 710 on the construction, equipment and operation of passenger ships in the Norwegian Territorial waters surrounding Svalbard.
[5]Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of high-speed craft used as passenger craft or cargo craft
[6] Cf. Formal Delegation of 16 February 2007 No. 171.

These amendments to SOLAS Chapter XIV entail an extension of the scope of application of that Chapter, with the result that this section now applies to all ships falling within the scope set out in section 1, and not only to ships holding international safety certificates.

To section 3 Ships holding international safety certificates
Part I-A of the Polar Code has previously been implemented through section 3. The implementation of Part I-A has now been divided in order to distinguish between ships that are already subject to the Regulations and are required to comply with the entirety of Part I-A of the Polar Code, and a new category of ships that are only required to comply with chapters 9-1 and 11-1 of Part I-A of the Polar Code.[7]

New section 3 implements the entirety of Part I-A of the Polar Code for ships holding international safety certificates, that is, the ships referred to in section 1, subparagraphs (a) and (b). This provision does not entail any substantive changes for ships holding international safety certificates.

To Section 4 Ships holding a trading certificate

First paragraph

First sentence
The new categories of ships referred to in section 1, first paragraphs (c) to (e) are only required to comply with chapters 9-1 and 11-1 of Part I-A of the Polar Code. Reference is also made to the comments on new section 3 above.

Second sentence
Pursuant to SOLAS Chapter XIV, regulation 3-1.1, due account shall be taken of the introduction and the safety-related provisions set out in Part I-A, Chapter 1, regulations 1.2 and 1.5 of the Polar Code. The wording “due account shall be taken” has also been used in the Norwegian text, although it may appear somewhat unclear. It is assumed that such an obligation is fulfilled by applying the provisions as a basis, unless other relevant considerations carry greater weight. Such an assessment must be carried out on a case-by-case basis and in relation to each individual provision.

Second paragraph
Pursuant to SOLAS Chapter XIV, regulation 3-1.2, the flag State administration shall determine whether a full or partial exemption is to be granted from regulations 9-1.3.1 and 9-1.3.2 of Part I-A of the Polar Code for fishing vessels of 24 metres in overall length and upwards, and for cargo ships and recreational craft of between 300 and 500 gross tonnage that are not engaged on international voyages.

The Norwegian Maritime Authority has found no basis for granting general exemptions from these requirements for any of the vessel categories concerned. Moreover, the granting of general exemptions at national level may contribute to other flag States introducing corresponding exemptions, which would result in a weakening of the regulatory framework.

This forms the basis for the wording of section 4, second paragraph, providing that Regulations 9-1.3.1 and 9-1.3.2 of Part I-A of the Polar Code also apply to ships referred to in section 1 (c), ships referred to in section 1 (d) of less than 500 gross tonnage not engaged on international voyages and ships referred to in section 1 (e) not engaged on international voyages.

Third paragraph
The first and second paragraphs also apply to the territorial waters around Svalbard and Jan Mayen[8].

[7] This approach is consistent with the structure of SOLAS Chapter XIV, as amended by IMO Resolution. MSC.538(107).
[8] Cf. the Act relating to Norway’s territorial waters and Formal Delegation of 27 June 2003 No. 798 and Formal Delegation of 25 February 2005 No. 173.

For ships falling within the scope of section 1, first paragraph (c) to (e), the international obligation to comply with chapters 9-1 and 11-1 of Part I-A of the Polar Code applies only to voyages in polar waters outside of the territorial sea of the ship's own flag State, cf. SOLAS Chapter XIV, regulation 3-1.1. For Norwegian ships, this means that chapters 9-1 and 11-1 of the Polar Code do not, as a general rule, apply in polar waters within the territorial waters around Svalbard and Jan Mayen.

The Norwegian Maritime Authority has found no grounds for refraining from regulating the Norwegian ships in this category that operate in polar waters within the territorial waters around Svalbard or Jan Mayen. As noted in the comments on the second paragraph, it is also not intended to contribute to a weakening of the international regulatory framework.

Foreign ships in the same categories as those referred to in section 1, (c) to (e), operating in polar areas around Svalbard and Jan Mayen are not covered by the exemption under SOLAS, as they operate outside the territorial sea of their (foreign) flag State. Pursuant to SOLAS Chapter XIV, regulation 3-1.2, cf. the comments on the new second paragraph, there is, however, a possibility for other flag States to exempt their fishing vessels from substantial parts of the regulatory framework, irrespective of the area of operation. This means that any exemptions granted will also apply in polar areas within Norwegian territorial waters.

For cargo ships and passenger ships holding international safety certificates pursuant to SOLAS Chapter 1, SOLAS Chapter XIV does not contain a corresponding geographical limitation on its scope of application.

Norwegian cargo ships holding international safety certificates as referred to in section 1, first paragraph (b), comprise cargo ships of 500 gross tonnage and upwards engaged on foreign voyages, cf. section 8 of the Certification Regulations. Svalbard and Jan Mayen fall within the trade area classified as "foreign voyages", and Norwegian cargo ships sailing to Svalbard and Jan Mayen are therefore required to hold an international safety certificate in order to operate in those areas.

Passenger ships are required to hold an international safety certificate as referred to in section 1, first paragraph (a), when engaged on an "international voyage", cf. section 6 of the Certification Regulations. Voyages between mainland Norway and Svalbard or Jan Mayen are not regarded as "international voyages", even though such voyages fall within the trade are classified as "foreign voyage" under the Norwegian Regulations relating to trade areas. Passenger ships operating solely between the ports referred to above are therefore not required to hold an international safety certificate pursuant to SOLAS Chapter I. These ships are not covered by the Regulations on safety measures for ships operating in polar waters.

For high-speed passenger craft and passenger ships not holding a Passenger Ship Safety Certificate pursuant to SOLAS Chapter I, the Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of passenger ships in the territorial waters surrounding Svalbard apply. Pursuant to section 18 of those Regulations, SOLAS Chapter XIV and Part I-A of the Polar Code shall apply; however, there is no requirement to hold an international Polar Ship Certificate. Those Regulations apply to both Norwegian and foreign passenger ships.

Fourth paragraph

New regulation 9-1.3.2 of the Polar Code contains certain requirements that apply exclusively to"ice-strengthened ships". However, this category of ships is not subject to the ice-strengthening requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Polar Code, and it may therefore be unclear which ships are to be regarded as ice-strengthened for the purposes of applying regulation 9-1.3.2 of the Polar Code. This is particularly relevant given that there are also no specific Norwegian public-law requirements for ice strengthening applicable to all ships within this category.[9]

[9]Fishing vessels are subject to ice-strengthening requirements pursuant to section 2-1 of the Regulations of 13 June 2000 No. 660 on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 metres in length and over. With the exception of the Polar Code requirements applicable to cargo ships holding international certificates, and the Regulations on small cargo ships

In the fourth paragraph, the Norwegian Maritime Authority has further specified which ships are to be regarded as "ice-strengthened" for the purposes of applying those requirements in regulation 9-1.3.2 of the Polar Code that apply exclusively to ice-strengthened ships. The definition encompasses ships subject to public-law requirements for ice strengthening, as well as ships that are ice-strengthened in accordance with a standard issued by a recognised classification society, a class rule issued by a recognised classification society or another recognised standard.

To section 5 Exemptions
The NMA refers here to the general provisions set out in SOLAS Chapter I, regulations 3 and 4, which govern the circumstances in which a ship may be exempted from complying with one or more requirements of the Convention, and the conditions applicable to the acceptance of equivalent arrangements. These provisions apply in cases not covered by SOLSD Chapter XIV, regulation 4, which has been implemented into Norwegian law by reference in section 2, and which sets out the conditions for the acceptance of alternative design and arrangements.

Comments on amendments to the Regulations on supervision and certificates for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units.
There is no requirement for a separate Polar Ship Certificate for ships referred to in section 1, subparagraphs (c), (d) and (e). However, ships that, following survey, are found to comply with the relevant provisions of the Polar Code will receive an endorsement to that effect on their existing certificate. Subsequent surveys to verify continued compliance with these requirements will thereafter be carried out in conjunction with the surveys related to the ship's trading certificate.

It has long been established practice that the NMA, upon application, has granted exemptions from the requirement to hold a trading certificate to undergo periodic surveys for recreational craft of 24 metres in overall length and upwards, cf. sections 25 and 25 of the Certification Regulations. This practice is based on the fact that the NMA has very few specific requirements applicable to this category of vessels, and that the issuance of such a "nominal" or "empty" certificate has been considered inappropriate.

Accordingly, the NMA has repealed the general requirement to hold a trading certificate for ships of 24 metres in overall length and upwards that are not used for commercial purposes, while retaining the requirement for those ships within this category that are intended to operate in polar waters. It should be noted that the safety requirements applicable to pleasure craft or ships used that are not used for commercial purposes under other regulations continue to apply, including during operations outside polar waters, notwithstanding the general repeal of the requirements for certification and periodic surveys for these ships.

III. Administrative and financial implications

1. Consequences for the industry
Several of the requirements arising from the amendments to the Polar Code already apply to fishing vessels, cargo ships and ships used outside commercial activities (recreational craft) pursuant to other regulations. This limits the practical impact of the present regulatory amendment on the industry. Reference is made in particular to the following regulations:

- Regulations of 13 June 2000 No. 660 on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 m in length and over
- Regulations of 1 July 2014 No. 995 on radiocommunication equipment for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units

(cargo ships of less than 24 metres in length (L)), there are currently no explicit requirements for ice strengthening of cargo ships. Pursuant to the Ship Safety and Security Act, a ship shall nevertheless be designed, constructed and equipped in such a manner as to provide an acceptable level of safety having regard to its intended purpose and area of operation. Cargo ships intended for operation in ice-covered areas will therefore normally be ice-strengthened.

- Regulations of 5 September 2014 No. 1157 on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units
- Regulations of 19 December 2014 No. 1853 on the construction and supervision of small cargo ships
- Draft Regulations on the construction, equipment and supervision of small cargo ships, which was subject to public consultation with a deadline of 12 June 2025m but has not yet been adopted

The number of ships within the specified size limits registered in the database of the NMA does not necessarily provide an accurate indication of how many ships will be affected by the relevant amendments to the Polar Code. This is because it is not possible to determine with certainty how many of these ships currently operate, or are intended to operate, in polar waters.

Searches of the NMA's s supervisory system indicate that there are 257 fishing vessels of 24 metres in overall length and upwards holding a valid certificate permitting operation in polar waters. Almost all of these vessels – 251 vessels – are assigner the trade area Deepsea dishing II. Four fishing vessels are certified for Ice-covered waters II, and four vessels are assigned unrestricted trade.

With regard to cargo ships, searches of the supervisory system indicate that there are 29 vessels of between 300 and 500 gross tonnage that are also assigned a trade area permitting operation in polar waters. Of these ships, thirteen are certified for European trade, seven for European trade north of 40° N, nine are assigned unrestricted trade and one ship has been assigned trade area Deep sea fishing II. The ships are distributed among the following registered sub-categories: twelve tugboats, seven vessels with cargo wells, three small workboats, two general cargo ships, two research vessels, one seismic support vessel, one support/emergency response vessel and one bulk carrier.

At present, no Norwegian ships of 300 gross tonnage and upwards are registered with the NMA as recreational craft. Nevertheless, a brief description of the consequences for this category of vessels is also provided below.

1.1 Information on ice conditions
Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.1 of the Polar Code, ships shall have the means of receiving and displaying current information on ice conditions in the area of operation.

1.1.1. Fishing vessels
Fishing vessels are already required to carry equipment for the reception of maritime safety information pursuant to section 9-6, first paragraph, items 4 and 5 of the Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 m in length and over. These provisions apply to both new and existing vessels, cf. section 9-1, and are not limited by trade ara.

1.1.2 Cargo ships
Pursuant to the Regulations on radiocommunication equipment for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units, SOLAS Chapter IV applies as regulation, cf. section 2 thereof. Chapter IV applies internationally to cargo ships of 300 gross tonnage and upwards engaged on international voyages. However, the Regulations on radiocommunication equipment for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units also make these provisions applicable to ships engaged on domestic voyages, cf. section 2, second paragraph.

SOLAS Chapter IV, regulation 7.1.4 reads as follows:
Every ship shall be provided with: […] .4 a receiver or receivers capable of receiving MSI and search and rescue related information throughout the entire voyage in which the ship is engaged;

The conditions contain no reservations as to date of construction or trade are and therefore apply to both new and existing ships in all trade areas.

1.1.3 Recreational craft

Pursuant to section 1 (e) of the Regulations on radiocommunication equipment for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units, recreational craft of 24 metres in overall length and upwards fall within the scope of application of those Regulations. Recreational craft of 24 metres in overall length and upwards and of 300 gross tonnage and upwards are subject to the same requirements as cargo ships.

Receivers typically used for this purpose, such as NAVTEX, Inmarsat and Iridium, are capable of both receiving and displaying the relevant information.

1.2 Depth measurement

Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.2.1.1 of the Polar Code, ice-strengthened ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026 shall have either two independent echo-sounding devices or one echo-sounding device with two separate independent transducers. Other depth-measuring equipment accepted by the NMA, such as fish-finding equipment, may be used as equivalent means for the purpose of complying with this requirement.

Where equivalent equipment is to be used, an application for acceptance must be submitted.

Fishing vessels

Fishing vessels are required to be fitted with one depth-measuring system pursuant to section 10-3, fourth paragraph of the Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 m in length and over. This requirement applies irrespective of the area of operation. New ice-strengthened fishing vessels intended to operate in polar waters will therefore be required to install one additional depth-measuring device. However, it is our understanding that this configuration already constitutes standard equipment on modern fishing vessels within the relevant size category.

Cargo ships

Cargo ships of 300 gross tonnage and upwards are required to be fitted with one echo-sounding device pursuant to section 15, first paragraph, of the Regulations on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units and the section 20 of the new Regulations on the construction, equipment and supervision of small cargo ships. New ice-strengthened cargo ships will therefore be required to install one additional depth-measuring device when operation in polar waters.

Recreational craft

Recreational craft of 24 metres in overall length and upwards fall within the scope of application of the Regulations on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units, cf. section 1, first paragraph (a), which provides that recreational craft of this size are to comply with the rules applicable to cargo ships under those Regulations. Recreational craft of 24 metres in overall length and upwards and of 300 gross tonnage and upwards are therefore also required to be fitted with an echo-sounding device, cf. section 15 of the Regulations on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units. New ice-strengthened recreational craft will therefore be required to install one additional depth-measuring device when operation in polar waters.

The cost of installing one additional independent echo-sounding device on ships that already carry an echo-sounding device is estimated at NOK 78,500. The cost of installing two independent echo-sounding devices is estimated at NOK 160,000.

1.3 Clear visibility

Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.2.1.2 of the Polar Code, ships shall comply with SOLAS regulation V/22.1.9.4, irrespective of date of construction and size, and shall provide clear visibility astern. For ships that are unable to meet these requirements, arrangements accepted by the Norwegian Maritime Authority shall be provided in order to achieve a level of visibility equivalent to that required.

SOLAS regulation V/22.1.9.4 reads as follows:

A clear view through at least two of the navigation bridge front windows and, depending on the bridge configuration, an additional number of clear-view windows shall be provided at all times, regardless of weather conditions.

In practice, the requirements set out in SOLAS regulation V/22.1.9.4 are already expected to be met by the relevant fishing vessels, cargo ships and ships used outside commercial activities [10]. In addition, clear visibility astern shall be ensured. For most ships, there is currently no explicit requirement under other regulations to provide clear visibility directly astern[11]. However, for ships that are unable to meet this requirement, the NMA may accept equivalent arrangements. For example, an arrangement incorporating suitable camera systems may be considered. The cost implications for the industry will depend on the solution selected. At the same time, there is reason to believe that a number of vessels already comply with this requirement.

1.4 Means to prevent the accumulation of ice on antennas

Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.2.1.3 of the Polar Code, ships operating in areas and during periods where icing is likely shall be provided with means to prevent the accumulation of ice on antennas required for navigation and communication. This requirement applies irrespective of the ship's date of construction.

Whether additional measures are required as a result of new regulation 9-1.3.2.1.3 will depend on how the company has chosen to comply with the requirements laid down in other applicable regulations.

Fishing vessels

Pursuant to section 9-5, second paragraph, item 3 if the Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 m in length and over, every radio installation shall be protected against harmful effects of water, extremes of temperature and other adverse environmental conditions. As regards navigational equipment, section 10-3, seventh paragraph, of the Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 m in length and over requires that equipment mandated under the Regulations be kept in efficient working order.

Cargo ships

Pursuant to SOLAS Chapter IV, regulation 6.2.3, cf section 2 of the Regulations on radiocommunication equipment for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units, every radio installation shall be protected against harmful effects of water, extremes of temperature and other adverse environmental conditions.

Pursuant to section 3 of the Regulations on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units, all reasonable measures shall be taken to ensure that navigational aids are maintained in good working order. A corresponding requirement is set out in section 11 of the new Regulations on the construction, equipment and supervision of small cargo ships.

[10] Regulations of 13 June 2000 No. 660 on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 m in length and over
Regulations of 15 October 1991 No. 712 on the constructions of vessels of 15 metres in overall length (LOA) and over
Regulations of 18 August 1978 No. 9154 on navigational aids, etc. on fishing vessels
Regulations of 5 September 2014 No. 1157 on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units
Regulations of 15 September 1992 No. 701 on navigational aids and arrangements on the bridge and in the wheelhouse, and communication equipment in the wheelhouse of ships
Regulations of 30 June 1987 No. 563 on navigational aids and arrangements on the bridge and in the wheelhouse, and communication equipment in the wheelhouse of ships
Regulations of 24 August 1984 No. 1578 on navigational aids and arrangements on the bridge and in the wheelhouse of ships
Regulations of 19 December 2014 No. 1853 on the construction and supervision of small cargo ships
Draft Regulations on the construction, equipment and supervision of small cargo ships, which was subject to public consultation with a deadline of 12 June 2025

[11] New Regulations on the construction, equipment and supervision of small cargo ships 19 first paragraph (b): *The wheelhouse shall provide a clear view astern.* This requirement applies to cargo ships of less than 24 metres in length (L).

Recreational craft
The Regulations on radiocommunication equipment for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units and the Regulations on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units also apply to recreational craft of 24 metres in overall length and upwards, cf. section 1 (e) of the Regulations on radiocommunication equipment for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units and section 2 of the Regulations on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units.

1.5 Protection of sensors that project below the hull
Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.2.1.4.1 of the Polar Code, ice-strengthened ships shall be provided with protection against ice for sensors forming part of equipment required under SOLAS Chapter V or new Chapter 9-1 of the Polar Code, where such sensors protrude from the hull. There is reason to assume that ships with ice strengthening already comply with this requirement. Reference is also made to section 1.4 above.

1.6 Protection of personnel and equipment on bridge wings
Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.2.1.4.2 of the Polar Code, ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026 and having ice strengthening of Category A or B, cf. the introduction to Chapter 2 of the Polar Code, shall be provided with bridge wings that are enclosed or otherwise designed to protect navigational equipment and operating personnel. On ships which cannot comply with this regulation, arrangements acceptable to the flag State Administration shall be provided to achieve a level of protection that is equivalent.

No corresponding specific requirement applies to fishing vessels, cargo ships or recreational craft under other regulations. However, the requirement applies only to new ships, and any additional costs will depend on whether compliance necessitates the selection of a design that would otherwise not have been chosen, or alternatively on the specific solutions selected by the company to protect navigational equipment and personnel. Enclosed bridge wings are nevertheless a common design solution today, irrespective of this requirement.

1.7 Non-magnetic means for determining and displaying the ship's heading
Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.2.2.1 of the Polar Code, ships of 500 gross tonnage and upwards shall have two non-magnetic means to determine and display their heading. Both means shall be independent and connected to the ship's main and emergency source of power.

A gyrocompass constitutes such non-magnetic equipment capable of determining and displaying the ship's heading. As an alternative, a non-magnetic transmitting heading device (THD) connected to the ship's main and emergency power supplies may be provided in addition to a gyro-compass.

Fishing vessels
Pursuant to the Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 m in length and over, many fishing vessels are required to be fitted with one gyro-compass system, cf. section 10-3, second paragraph. Vessels of 45 m in length (L) and over constructed on or after 1 September 1984 are required to be fitted with a gyro-compass. The same requirement applies to vessels of 75 m in length and over constructed prior to that date. When operating in polar areas, such vessels must, however, ensure that an additional magnetic means capable of determining and displaying the ship's heading is carried on board. Fishing vessels of 24 metres in overall length and upwards and og 500 gross tonnage and upwards, which are not subject to a gyro-compass requirement under the Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 24 metres in overall length and upwards, must carry two such non-magnetic means when operating in polar waters.

Cargo ships
Cargo ships of 500 gross tonnage and upwards fall outside the scope of application in this context. Such ships, which are required to hold international certificates, are nevertheless subject to the applicable requirements of the Polar Code.

Recreational craft
Pursuant to section 15 of the Regulation on navigation and navigational aids for ships and mobile offshore units, which also applies to recreational craft of 24 metres in overall length and upwards, ships of 500 gross tonnage and upwards constructed on or after 1 July 2002 are required to be fitted with one gyro-compass. Recreational craft of 500 gross tonnage and upwards that are intended to operate in polar areas must therefore be provided with one additional non-magnetic means for determining and displaying the ship's heading, or two such means where no such equipment is already installed.

The cost of a gyro-compass is estimated at approximately NOK 170,000.

1.8 GNSS compass
Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.2.2.2 of the Polar Code, ships proceeding to latitudes over 80 degrees shall be fitted with at least one GNSS compass or equivalent, which shall be connected to the ship's main and emergency source of power.

Neither fishing vessels, cargo ships nor recreational craft are subject to a requirement to carry such a compass under other regulations. However, it is our understanding that a number of fishing vessels are already fitted with a GNSS compass, notwithstanding the absence of a formal requirement. It should be noted that where a ship is proceeding to latitudes over 80 degrees, the GNSS compass must be connected to both the main and emergency power supplies. The estimated cost of a GNSS compass is approximately NOK 47,000.

1.9 Illumination to aid visual detection of ice
Pursuant to new regulation 9-1.3.3 of the Polar Code, ships that do not operate in areas with continuous daylight shall be provided with two light sources enabling the detection of ice. Such a light source will typically be a searchlight.

Pursuant to section 10-5 if the Regulations on the construction, equipment and operation of fishing vessels of 15 m in length and over, all fishing vessels are required to be fitted with at least one searchlight. For cargo ships and recreational craft, however, there is no explicit requirement under other regulations to carry such equipment. Nevertheless, it is likely that a number of ships already carry at least one searchlight on board. Ships intended to operate in polar areas will therefore be required to install one or two light sources, such as searchlights, depending on the equipment already fitted on board. The estimated cost of a searchlight is from NOK 30,000 per unit and upwards.

1.10 Voyage planning
Pursuant to new regulation 11-1.3 of the Polar Code, the master shall consider a route through polar waters, taking into account a number of factors, cf. regulation 11-1.3, paragraphs 1 to 9.

The costs for the industry will primarily be associated with the time required for mapping and assessment, as well as any expenses related to access to relevant information, to the extent that new regulation 11-1.3 imposes more stringent requirements for voyage planning than those arising from the ship's safety management system and established practice.

1.11 Survey
Ships must have an endorsement in their trading certificate prior to operating in poplar waters, cf. sections 24, amended fourth paragraph, 25, new fifth paragraph, 26, first paragraph, new subparagraph

(c) and 27, new fourth paragraph, of the Regulations on supervision and certificates for Norwegian ships and mobile offshore units.

In order to obtain such an endorsement, an additional survey must be carried out, unless the survey required for endorsement can be performed in connection with a regular periodic survey. The Norwegian Maritime Authority is, however, of the view that endorsement of the certificate outside the regular periodic surveys will, in most cases, be capable of being carried out without significant disruption to operations, by conducting the survey when the ship is in port for other purposes, such as loading, unloading or yard stays. With regard to the requirement for protection of sensors protruding from the hull, which applies to ice-strengthened ships, compliance may be documented through the ship's drawings. The company is advised to apply for survey well in advance.

2. Consequences for the Norwegian Maritime Authority and recognised classification societies

As a general rule, the regulatory amendments will form part of the existing survey regime applicable to the various ship types. However, as noted above, a new initial survey must be carried out for ships referred to in section 1, first paragraph (c), (d) and (e). Such an additional survey will only be required where the endorsement in the certificate authorising operation in polar waters cannot be made in connection with existing survey arrangements. In principle, the survey may be carried out while the ship is in port, for example during a yard stay, unloading or similar operation. With regard to the requirement for protection of sensors protruding from the hull on ice-strengthened ships, compliance will normally be capable of being verified by reference o the ship’s drawings.

Ships not used for commercial purposes of 300 gross tonnage and upwards, which have previously been granted exemptions from the general requirement to hold a trading certificate – an exemption that is now repealed in the Certification Regulations – must also be certified if they are to operate in polar waters. It is, however, expected that this will apply to only a very limited number of ships, if any. As noted above, there are currently no Norwegian recreational craft of 300 gross tonnage and upwards registered in the systems of the Norwegian Maritime Authority.

The Norwegian Maritime Authority has furthermore been required to update relevant checklists, and there will likely be a continued need to provide information and guidance, both internally and externally, regarding the new requirements. Relevant certificate templates have been revised in order to clearly indicate whether a ship is authorised to operate in polar waters.

No amendments have been required to the class agreement. However, for ships subject to these regulatory amendments that are certified by a recognised classification society, the classification society will likewise be required to update checklists, provide guidance and undertake related preparatory work. Recognised classification societies will also be required to carry out initial surveys, as referred to above, where endorsement of the certificate cannot be mad in connection with ordinary surveys.

The amendments will have no consequences for approved companies, as they do not apply to ships of less than 15 metres in overall length[12].

[12] Neither cargo ships, nor ships not used for commercial purposes, of less than 15 metres in overall length are subject to a requirement to hold a tonnage certificate, cf. the Regulations on the tonnage measurement of ships and mobile offshore units.

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This document has been electronically approved and therefore does not contain handwritten signatures.