

Research for enhancement of safety at sea

In addition to administrative tasks, the duties of the Maritime Shipping Department also cover technical analysis, and scientific and nautical-technical research to enhance safety at sea. BSH was at the forefront of the development of the electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS) as well as of the first ideas to design a voyage data recorder (VDR) or the automatic identification system (AIS).

Active participation in the IMO work for mandatory carriage requirements for such systems and subsequent work in relevant bodies for international performance and testing standards are further aspects of the work of the Maritime Shipping Department.



Equipment tests and market surveillance

The duties of the Maritime Shipping Department also comprise the plan approval for the correct location and installation of communication and navigation equipment on the bridge of a ship and the on board testing of the equipment.

Safety at sea is reliant on systems and equipment that operate reliably. In case of a reasonable suspicion that safety or reliability of life saving appliances, fire protection equipment or communication and navigation equipment is compromised, the Maritime Shipping Department can take action as the responsible German market surveillance authority for the EU Marine Equipment Directive (MED).

Relevant tests for communication and navigation equipment can be conducted in a number of own laboratories. With regard to necessary testing of other equipment contained in the MED, the market surveillance can cooperate with external specialist laboratories.

www.bsh.de | www.deutsche-flagge.de



BSH Hamburg

Bernhard-Nocht-Str. 78 · 20359 Hamburg · Germany
Phone: +49 (0) 40 3190-0 · Fax: +49 (0) 40 3190-5000
E-mail: posteingang@bsh.de

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BSH – On duty for Maritime Shipping



The Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH – Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie) is the German maritime authority. Its core task is the safety of shipping and the protection of the marine environment. It is the understanding of the BSH and its Maritime Shipping Department that use and protection of the seas, in the best interest of shipping and the marine ecosystem, has to be balanced and needs to be globally agreed on and effectively implemented.

International conventions and regulations describe the requirements for the safety at sea and the protection of the marine environment. Hence, the BSH staff works in more than 15 international organizations and in about 200 associated bodies, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) or the Oslo-Paris Commission (OSPAR).

The BSH provides its knowledge about shipping developments and the sea constantly to the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI). In that, the expertise of the staff of the Maritime Shipping Department are numerous and diverse.



The ship-related administrative tasks of the Maritime Shipping Department include the

- approval for ships in German ownership to operate under a foreign flag;
- management of the International Ship Registry (ISR) and the German maritime database;
- issuance of official documents like liability certificates to prove the existence of required insurance cover, or for the security system on board, or tonnage documents;
- allowance of shipping subsidies granted by the Federal Government.

The seafarer-related administrative tasks of the Maritime Shipping Department comprise the

- issuance of certificates of competency, certificates of proficiency, and other official seafarer documents;
- issuance of endorsements for certificates of competency and certificates of proficiency of foreign seafarers to allow for employment on board of a ship under German flag;
- management of the central German seafarer database.

Maritime Hotline as extended service

As part of the German flag administration, and in cooperation the with Ship Safety Division, the website www.deutsche-flagge.de has been established. This is the central site containing all relevant information about the German flag State addressed to seafarers, shipping companies and all other maritime stakeholders.

To improve the service for maritime shipping, the BSH has extended the customer service for the German flag State. Since April 2016 shipowners, seafarers, maritime authorities and others can rely on the Maritime Hotline service at their disposal 24 hours on 7 days for expert questions as well as emergencies. With this extended service, the BSH and the Ship Safety Division increase their availability for matters concerning maritime shipping. Direct contact with the

German flag is possible day and night as well as on Sundays on public holidays to answer questions regarding maritime shipping and to be able to resolve pressing issues.

Maritime Hotline: +49 (0) 40 3190-7777.

Marine environment protection

Lasting use of the seas will only be possible if protection of the sensitive ecosystems can be achieved globally and based upon the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and other mandatory international regulations. Here, the main areas of the work of the Maritime Shipping Department range from the enforcement of the stricter sulphur limits for ships air emissions in the emission control area of the Baltic and the North Sea through to the approval of ballast water treatment systems in accordance with the IMO standards.

Maritime Shipping (S)			
S1 Market Surveillance, Certification of Mariners, Law of the Flag, Promotion of Shipping	S2 Tonnage Measurement, Individual Surveys and Inspections, German Maritime Database	S3 Navigation and Communication Systems	S4 Environmental Protection in Maritime Traffic, Prevention of Threats, other Legal Matters of the Department
S11 Market Surveillance, Supervision of Notified Bodies	S21 Tonnage Measurement, Individual Surveys and Inspections	S31 Radiocommunication, Radiodetection	S41 Environmental Protection in Maritime Traffic
S12 Certification of Mariners	S22 German Maritime Database	S32 Physical Navigational Equipment	S42 Maritime Security
S13 Law of the Flag and Promotion of Shipping		S33 Navigation Systems, Satellite Navigation	S43 Shipping Law, International Civil Liability Conventions, General Tasks