



GUIDANCE NOTICE

Are you altering or maintaining a vessel?

If the National Law requires a certificate of survey to be in force for a domestic commercial vessel (DCV), it is a condition of the certificate that the DCV not be altered without the approval of the National Regulator.

Under the NSCV, to 'alter' a vessel means to change the vessel such that new measures are required to eliminate or control the risk to health and safety, but does not include routine maintenance, repairs or replacements.

The purpose of this Guidance Notice is provide examples of changes that the National Regulator considers to be alterations requiring approval.

If you have any questions or concerns about whether a particular activity will be an alteration for the purposes of the National Law (and therefore require the approval of the National Regulator), please contact the delegate of National Regulator in your State or Territory.

Alterations

Alterations typically alter the structure, stability, or systems on a vessel. Analyses of many accidents and incidents have shown that seemingly minor alterations to a vessel can have catastrophic consequences.

Some examples of hull, deck or superstructure work that are likely to be *alterations*:

- any additions to or removals from the hull, superstructure or gear on any vessel
- removing, repositioning or modifying any portion of fixed ballast, lifting equipment, trawl apparatus, refrigeration equipment, fish or any other tanks
- Alteration to towing arrangements
- fitting additional fuel or water tanks, or changing tank usage
- changing in any way navigation or other lights on a vessel
- fitting clears or Bimini's
- adding accommodation pods
- lengthening a vessel or increasing its beam
- major refits
- major hull repairs
- changes to gas systems
- changes to anchoring or mooring arrangements
- fitting of net reels or new fishing or lifting equipment
- repairs to areas which affect primary structure and the watertight integrity of the vessel—including the fitting to, or creating of a penetration through, a deck or watertight bulkhead

- moving, creating or blocking any access ways in the vessel in any way.
- Modifications to guardrails and restraints on openings in railings or bulwarks
- relocation of safety equipment.

Electrical work that is considered an *alteration*:

- installation or alteration in any way of any alternating current wiring or systems (including generators).
All work of this nature must be carried out by a licensed electrician. Although this is work that a tradesman must do, in practical terms it often involves breaching bulkheads, altering weight distributions, and potentially affecting fire and other safety systems, and it needs to be fully considered. This being the case, it's also possible that DC electrical work could have implications for the vessel, and may constitute an alteration.

Mechanical work that is considered *alterations*:

- replacement of an engine/gearbox which is not identical in brand, type, ratio, horsepower or weight of the original engine/gearbox, or the original engine/gearbox is repositioned on the vessel
- fitting a Kortz Nozzle, a new propeller shaft or coupling, or other new stern gear
- fitting the existing trawl winch to a new location on the vessel
- installing a new trawl winch of a different type or fitting a new trawl winch in a new location
- installing new or additional fixed fire fighting equipment.

Maintenance work

Hull, deck or superstructure work that is typically *maintenance*:

- painting
- small 'make good' type repairs to existing parts of the vessel (steel, timber, plywood, fibreglass etc.) provided the area being repaired does not interfere with, compromise, or alter watertight integrity and/or subdivision on the vessel.

Mechanical work that is typically *maintenance*:

- servicing of equipment that remains on the vessel, such as oil and filter changes and mechanical adjustments or repairs to existing machinery
- removal and replacement of the same engine block and its components with new/used parts
- removal and replacement of a gearbox, reduction drive, propeller shaft or propeller, or replacement of same with an identical weight, size and materials and where applicable, ratio or pitch—provided the work is performed by, or under the supervision of, a competent person
- removal and replacement of winches, pumping systems or stern gear—provided the same/identical equipment is fitted to the same location on the vessel and the work is performed by, or under the supervision of, a competent person.

Electrical work that is typically *maintenance*:

- cleaning battery terminals or connections on extra low voltage (12/24v) systems
- replacing light globes and fuses
- adjustments or updates to radio or computer equipment
- replacement or repairs to existing electrical wiring, lights, switches, sockets or generators on low voltage (240/415v) systems to the same standard, in the same location, and by a licensed electrician
- replacing a burnt out anchor winch motor with the same size unit
- replacing a plug-in refrigerator or other appliance..

In summary, it needs to be understood that seemingly minor alterations to a vessel can have very serious consequences and can put lives at risk.

Advice is readily available through AMSA delegates, all of whom are committed to ensuring your safety on the water. Please contact them if there is any doubt.

The contact details for each of the AMSA Delegates may be found on the AMSA website or by calling the National System helpline on **02 6279 5000**.