

Date: 20-11-2012

Reference: PHW

Why Is 12 Considered Safer Than 13 – The questions arising from the need to operate Wind Farm Crew Vessels with more than 12 passengers onboard

Abstract:

Crew transfer vessels (CTV) play a significant logistical role in the construction and operation of offshore wind farms. These vessels are contracted by the developer, turbine supplier, construction contractor or a myriad of sub-contractors and perform an ever increasing scope of work. The primary role of a CTV has evolved from transporting personnel from base ports offshore to the turbines or offshore installation or accommodation vessels, to high pressure washing of towers and boat landings, delivering fuel to temporary generators on turbines, power generation vessels for turbine testing, diving support, survey work and the list goes on.

As wind farm operations move increasingly further offshore and across international boundaries, more attention is being placed the cost of human logistics. Therefore the industry is facing increased requests for vessels that can carry more than 12 passengers in a cost effective fashion. However, the industry faces a significant problem in that there are no clear, practical rules for the construction, certification or operation of vessels carrying greater than 12 passengers other than being a Passenger vessel under the High Speed Craft Code 2000; a set of rules developed for ferries operating on pendulum services between two ports. The question that is increasingly being asked is why is a vessel that is currently considered safe to carry 12 technicians suddenly becomes unsafe if 13 are onboard. At present there is no clear answer.

The Classification Society, Det Norske Veritas, has attempted to solve this issue by proposing the Tentative Rules for Service Vessel, the WFSV 2 notation, and many of their IACS colleagues are also in the process of producing similar rules. The DNV Rules propose a practical interpretation of the IMO High Speed Craft Code 2000, directed towards services such as wind farms. This proposal has generated positive responses from both regulators and industry alike, but is limited by the fact that they are Class rules and not statutory regulation. Germany has spearheaded a proposal for a solution based on the DNV approach through IMO, but this is a slow process. Other Flags are proposing solutions but no clear has emerged. Without clear guidance from the IMO or from the North and Baltic Sea states at a minimum, the industry is left in an uncomfortable area of commercial and regulatory risk.

As IMCA members either own and operate CTVs or charter them in to assist with completion of their own work scopes it is the objective of this paper to describe the challenges faced in meeting the requirements for carrying larger numbers of passengers safely and efficiently. IMCA, through its advisory role at IMO has been involved in the reviewing and commenting on the German proposal and has encouraged the involvement of IMCA members in this process. The current regulatory framework, the definition of a passenger, the historical baggage and what steps are being taken to gain clarification such as DNV WFSV 2 will all be discussed.

Permission is explicitly denied for any republication of text or photographs of this article without the prior express written consent of the author.