

REVISED GUIDELINES FOR THE IMO HONOURS FOR EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY AT SEA

Introduction

1 These Guidelines* aim to define the purpose of, and the criteria for granting, the IMO Honours for Exceptional Bravery at Sea. They stipulate the process by which nominations will be sought, considered, assessed, judged and decided; the form of the three categories of honour; and the manner in which they will be awarded.

Purpose and criteria

2 The Honours will be conferred on individuals or groups of individuals who, at the risk to their own life, perform acts of exceptional bravery in attempting to save life at sea or in attempting to prevent or mitigate damage to the marine environment. Such acts of bravery may also involve extraordinary seamanship skills in very difficult conditions or any other display of outstanding courage.

3 Except in the most extraordinary circumstances, the nominated rescues should occur at sea or those rescued should emanate from a vessel. The Honours may also be granted posthumously.

4 There are three categories of honour:

1. the Award: for the nominee(s) judged to have performed the most outstanding act of bravery in a situation of grave danger to themselves or others and under very difficult conditions.
2. Certificates of Commendation: for nominees who have committed acts of extraordinary bravery in a situation of danger to themselves or others and under challenging conditions.
3. Letters of Commendation: for nominees who are judged to deserve some form of special recognition for their meritorious acts of bravery.

5 The level of honour is generally determined by the circumstances surrounding the incident, the degree of risk to the life of the person(s) performing the act, or to the person(s) being rescued, or the threat to the marine environment and whether such actions were taken with disregard for the nominee's own safety. In addition, personal skills or qualifications of the candidate must be taken into account, differentiating between the extraordinary actions of professional rescuers and those of others who, in the normal course of their duties, would not be expected to risk their lives to rescue persons in distress at sea.

6 All nominations will be initially considered for the Award. The level of honour will be assessed by the Assessment Panel and decided by the Panel of Judges.

* Guidelines for the establishment of the IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea were approved by the Council at its ninety-sixth session in June 2006 and endorsed by the Assembly at its twenty-fifth session in November 2007. The Council approved revisions to the Guidelines at its 113th session in December 2014, which were endorsed by the Assembly at its twenty-ninth session in December 2015. Further amendments to the Guidelines were approved by the Council at its 120th session in July 2018 and noted by the Assembly at its thirty-first session in December 2019.

Nominations

7 Nominations for the Award should be made by IMO Member States, intergovernmental organizations with observer status and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with IMO. The Honours are intended to recognize actions in response to a specific incident, rather than multiple incidents that may have occurred during the qualifying period.

8 Nominations should be addressed to the Secretary-General in accordance with procedures outlined in the yearly circular inviting nominations, which includes the relevant forms that need to be completed and signed. Nominations should indicate the nominating Government (and need not be confined to its own nationals) or organization. They should also provide a full description of the circumstances and events giving rise to the nomination, including:

- .1 location of the incident;
- .2 prevailing weather conditions;
- .3 further details of the incident;
- .4 details of the individual/group nominated;
- .5 personal skills/qualifications of the nominee(s);
- .6 potential damage to the marine environment (if any);
- .7 narrative description of the exceptional act of bravery, including such factors as:
 - skill displayed;
 - leadership demonstrated;
 - determination to conduct the rescue operation;
 - exceptional courage demonstrated;
 - degree of risk (to human lives and/or the marine environment) involved;
 - exceptional seamanship involved; as well as
- .8 any other information, including audiovisual materials, supporting the nomination.

9 In order to ensure a proper and fair assessment by the judging panels, it is essential that Governments and organizations, when nominating candidates, provide clear and sufficient information in the narrative description (point 7 above), particularly the reasons why the nominated action warrants the description of "exceptional bravery at sea".

Qualifying period and the deadline for submission of nominations

10 The qualifying period for any given year should be for actions performed from 1 March of the previous year to 28 February of the current year. The deadline for the submission of nominations should be on 15 April of the current year. In the case 15 April falls on a weekend or public holiday (UK), the following first working day will be considered as the deadline.

11 If the qualifying period and/or the deadline for submission of nominations need to vary or be extended due to extraordinary circumstances, the Secretariat will inform Governments and organizations in a timely and appropriate manner.

12 Actions performed outside the qualifying period or nominations received after the deadline has expired will not be eligible for consideration.

Assessment Panel

13 Nominations for the Award will be scrutinized by an Assessment Panel composed of the Secretary-General or his nominee, as Chair, together with experts nominated by the following NGOs in consultative status with IMO:

- the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS);
- the International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA);
- the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSMA);
- the International Salvage Union (ISU);
- the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF); and
- the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

14 The members of the Panel will be appointed by the Secretary-General and will serve for one year in their personal and expert capacity and not as representatives of the organizations nominating them. Members of the Panel from organizations submitting nominations should recuse themselves from consideration of those nominations.

15 The function of the Assessment Panel will be to review the nominations, taking into account the purpose of and criteria for the Honours, vis-à-vis the description of the factual circumstances giving rise to the nominations and the related supporting documentation. The Panel will submit a report to a Panel of Judges with the candidates they consider deserving of each category of honour, along with the rationale for their recommendations.

Panel of Judges

16 A Panel of Judges composed of the Chairs of the Maritime Safety Committee, the Marine Environment Protection Committee, the Legal Committee, the Technical Cooperation Committee and the Facilitation Committee and chaired by the Chair of the Council will consider the recommendations of the Assessment Panel and select the recipients of each category of honour. Members of the Panel from countries submitting nominations should recuse themselves from consideration of those nominations.

17 If the Chair of the Panel (i.e. the Chair of the Council) is not available, the Vice-Chair of the Council will serve as Chair. If a Chair of any Committee is not available to serve as a member of the Panel, the corresponding Vice-Chair may serve in his/her place.

18 In the event that the Panel of Judges decides that no act performed by any candidate merits the Award, they may still decide to recognize deserving nominees with Certificates of Commendation or Letters of Commendation.

19 The Council will be invited to endorse the recommendation of the Panel of Judges.

Form of the three categories of honour and the ceremony of presentation

20 The IMO Honours for Exceptional Bravery at Sea will be presented by the Secretary-General at IMO Headquarters on a major IMO occasion, as appropriate, taking into account, inter alia, the availability of the recipient of the Award. A virtual mode may be considered, if needed. In exceptional circumstances, the Honours may be presented at an alternative location.

21 The Award will take the form of a medal which will be accompanied by a certificate citing the type of act of exceptional bravery performed.

22 The recipients of the Award and Certificates of Commendation will be invited to attend the IMO Awards Ceremony to receive their accolades in person. All costs related to participants' attendance will be covered by the nominating Government/organization.

23 Recipients of Letters of Commendation may also attend the ceremony, if they wish. However, Letters of Commendation will be posted to the nominating authorities, which will be responsible for forwarding/presenting the accolade to the recipients.
