

Unapproved Courses at Gulf Coast Maritime Academy

An investigation by the Coast Guard has revealed that between January 2018 and November 2023, Gulf Coast Maritime Academy (GCMA), located near Tampa, FL, failed to provide proper instruction in all Basic Firefighting, Basic Firefighting Refresher, Basic Firefighting Revalidation, and Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) Basic Training courses. These courses require live firefighting, which was not conducted at the school. The impacted courses did not meet the practical requirements contained in the terms of their respective Coast Guard Approvals. As a result, these courses are not Coast Guard-approved and certificates issued for these courses are invalid. Due to numerous deficiencies identified by Coast Guard auditors found at the school, the National Maritime Center (NMC) withdrew approval letters for all courses.

To avoid interruption of the Marine Transportation System, the Coast Guard will allow, for a limited time, mariners who took the Basic Firefighting and STCW Basic Training to retain endorsements from these courses. Upon publication of this bulletin, the NMC will begin contacting each mariner who has submitted a Basic Firefighting or STCW Basic Training course from GCMA in prior or current Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) applications. **These mariners will be required to retake Basic Firefighting or alternatively they may submit a Basic Firefighting Refresher or Basic Firefighting Revalidation course to retain their endorsements.**

No action will be required from mariners who took Basic Firefighting Refresher or Basic Firefighting Revalidation. The mariners who took Basic Firefighting Refresher or Basic Firefighting Revalidation will be notified for awareness that the courses they attended did not meet the practical requirements contained in the terms of their respective Coast Guard Approvals.

Failure to act: Mariners who took Basic Firefighting or STCW Basic Training will have until October 1, 2025, to comply with the above requirements. After this date, the NMC will not process any further applications for these mariners until this matter is resolved. Any mariner who does not take action regarding their Basic Firefighting course may be subject to further action to remove the endorsements that require the invalid courses. The NMC will rely on contact information on file to notify affected mariners. Mariners who took the listed courses between January 2018 and November 2023 should monitor their e-mails, phone calls, and physical mail for correspondence from the NMC regarding this matter. Mariners and marine employers with questions about this bulletin should contact the NMC Compliance Investigations Branch at (304) 433-3466 or via e-mail at MCFTF@uscg.mil.

Sincerely,

/B. W. Clare/

Bradley W. Clare
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Commanding Officer