

## **EMBARC UPDATE: Building a Safe Maritime Industry (September 2022)**

As U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg shared in June at the graduation of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) Class of 2022, “Everyone must join in declaring that sexual assault has no safe harbor in the maritime industry. But that is only the beginning. As every Academy midshipman knows, it’s not our words that matter, but our actions—Acta Non Verba.”

The Maritime Administration (MARAD) and USMMA are committed to continuing to advance the safety measures we introduced in December 2021. These measures will help ensure that USMMA provides a world-class education in safe learning environments both on campus and at sea.

### **EMBARC: Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture**

MARAD/USMMA introduced the Every Mariner Builds a Respectful Culture (EMBARC) program in December 2021. It sets forth policies, programs, procedures, and practices to help prevent and respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) and other forms of misconduct on commercial vessels at sea. Vessel owners and operators must adopt the EMBARC program standards before embarking USMMA cadets on board. The agency published a previous [update](#) on the implementation of EMBARC in April 2022.

Advancing EMBARC is critical to the success of commercial at-sea training for cadets, and to strengthening safety for all mariners. To date, 14 companies have enrolled in the EMBARC program. MARAD commends the companies that have already enrolled and urges every U.S.-flagged carrier to follow their example as soon as possible.

MARAD has published and continues to update [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) to address key issues raised by operators and other stakeholders.

Consistent with the EMBARC standards, in July 2022, MARAD hosted the first quarterly EMBARC meeting at the Department of Transportation (DOT) Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Nearly 100 participants representing a wide range of stakeholders—including carriers, labor organizations, and the state maritime academies—attended the meeting. During this meeting, we discussed how to improve the implementation of the EMBARC program and how to continue to support culture change throughout the maritime industry.

### **Creation of the Office of Cadet Training At-Sea Safety (OCTAS)**

MARAD has created a new office called the Office of Cadet Training At-Sea Safety (OCTAS) to oversee implementation of the EMBARC program, including vessel operator enrollments and continuing compliance with EMBARC safety standards. The new Office Director reported to MARAD on August 15, 2022. MARAD is working to fill additional positions. OCTAS will be the primary office within MARAD responsible for developing, implementing, and administering the agency’s policies and procedures related to the safety of cadets at sea. In addition, MARAD is conducting vessel assessments to ensure compliance with EMBARC standards.

MARAD has also engaged a subject matter expert who has recommended numerous revisions to strengthen the EMBARC policy document—as well as our Superintendent’s Instruction on Sea Year and the Sea Year guide provided to cadets before they depart for sea. USMMA is working to revise both documents.

## **Sea Year Training**

Sea Year is a cooperative educational program designed to give midshipmen the hands-on shipboard training required to meet U.S. Coast Guard licensing requirements for merchant mariners. Sea Year Training typically consists of an approximately four-month sailing period during a midshipman’s sophomore year and an eight-month sailing period during a midshipman’s junior year. USMMA’s Sea Year training model, which provides extensive training aboard commercial vessels, is unique among U.S. maritime academies.

As of August 22, 2022, 165 USMMA cadets have earned sea time on 30 Military Sealift Command ships, 135 USMMA cadets have earned sea time on 33 EMBARC-enrolled commercial vessels, 66 USMMA cadets have earned sea time on Ready Reserve Force ships, and 65 USMMA cadets have earned sea time on 17 vessels operated by the Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. USMMA cadets have also sailed on training vessels operated by state maritime academies and MARAD. All qualified midshipmen in the Class of 2023 are projected to earn the sea time required to take licensing exams on time next year.

## **Next Steps**

Pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2022, MARAD will establish a new Federal Advisory Committee this Fall. This committee, which was recommended by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) as part of its November 2021 Organizational Assessment of USMMA, will provide advice and recommendations on issues related to curriculum development and training programs; diversity, equity, and inclusion; sexual assault and harassment prevention and response; midshipmen health and welfare; and other matters. MARAD received more than 130 applications in response to our Federal Register Notice seeking applicants. Applications are undergoing review and appointments will be announced shortly.