

United message for Workboat Code Edition 3 deadline: 'Check. Prepare. Book'

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Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Workboat Association urge operators to get ready for 2026 transition.

Workboat owners and operators with vessels requiring a survey by December 2026 are being urged to act now to avoid missing the deadline for transition to the updated code of safety standards.

The message is being issued jointly by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Workboat Association to those affected by transitional arrangements to the Workboat Code Edition 3 ending on 13 December 2026.

The aim is to avoid demand for surveys at the end of the year causing a shortage of slots, and the potential for vessels having to be tied up while they wait to be seen by certifying authorities.

Affected vessels will be among those currently holding five-year certification under previous codes, including the Brown Code, its equivalent standard published in MGN 280(M), or Workboat Code Edition 2, Amendment 1.

Transition to Workboat Code Edition 3 permitted vessels to meet requirements by the vessel's next renewal examination or three years after the date of entry into force of the Code, on 13 December 2023, whichever is later.

It means that 13 December 2026 is when the first cohort of vessels not to have transitioned to the new code must have secured the correct certification to remain active.

The advice from the MCA and Workboat Association is: check the code, prepare the vessel, book the survey.

Rob Taylor, MCA Code Vessel Lead, said:

The UK's fleet of workboats delivers a vital service for a wide range of maritime industries. To ensure business keeps flowing, we want to help make sure everyone is ready.

The Workboat Code Edition 3 was created to help the industry stay safe and support developing technology. It's a clearer code but there are changes, so we want everyone to be prepared without a last-minute rush.

The MCA and the Workboat Association are speaking with one voice to encourage owners and operators to do three things: check the code, prepare the vessel, book the survey.

Kerrie Forster, Chief Executive Officer of the Workboat Association, said:

With the first transition deadline fast approaching, I urge all operators of previous Workboat Code editions to ensure their vessels, crew and documentation are fully aligned.

This is not just a regulatory milestone – it's an important opportunity for industry to demonstrate its commitment to safety, consistency, and professionalism.

Do not allow yourself to be caught out by the 13 December 2026 deadline.

An operator who is securing safety certification under the Workboat Code Edition 3 is Ben Wheatley, Marine Superintendent at Marine Plant Hire (UK) Ltd.

Read Ben's story: Firm's business boost from embracing Workboat Code Edition 3

Ben, whose background is a certified Master, believes embracing the Code is an "investment" that, with forward planning, has strengthened clients' confidence in Marine Plant Hire (UK) Ltd's capabilities and fueled its expansion.

Ben said:

Essentially, it makes you more commercially resilient – clients are seeing the value in the Code.

Background

The Workboat Code Edition 3 includes the world's first maritime safety legislation for the development of remotely operated unmanned vessels and workboats using alternative fuels.

Previously, operators needed to consult different codes, depending on their vessel's age and specifications. The new, unified version places these sets of requirements into a single publication.

Visit the Workboat Code Edition 3.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/united-message-for-workboat-code-edition-3-deadline-check-prepare-book>