

Overtime To Be Paid to Officers Performing Pre-Watch Rounds **Guild Wins Grievance at Labour Board - Nov 2025**

The Guild has posted onto our website the long-awaited decision by the Federal Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board regarding our grievance seeking compensation for Officers performing pre-watch rounds. Translation of the decision is underway.

The Guild filed this grievance on behalf of two Coast Guard Officers, both Engineers, working under Appendix H (the lay-day system). The hearing took place over 2 years ago, in October 2023 with arguments presented by the Guild's legal counsel and staff. The grievances claimed these Members were denied overtime for the performance of their pre-watch rounds and changeover, both of which necessarily happened outside of their regularly scheduled 12 hour shift.

The employer made two arguments. Their first argument was that the pre-watch rounds and changeover were not work for the employer but a separate personal obligation under the STCW. The Board dismissed this argument for two reasons: the first is that the STCW obligations are recognized by the employer as workplace obligations in multiple internal policies and other documents; and the second is that, even if the employer had not explicitly referenced the obligation in its own documents, the fact remains that no watchkeeper can take over the watch without first completing their pre-watch rounds and changeover duties. The Board agreed with the Union that the pre-watch rounds and changeover duties are mandatory duties for every watchkeeper.

The employer's second argument was that, even if the Board found that the pre-watch rounds and changeover duties were required work, watchkeepers should not be able to request payment since overtime must be pre-approved and the grievors had not obtained approval from a supervisor prior to performing the pre-watch rounds and changeover each shift.

The Board also rejected this argument and agreed with the Union that the purpose of requiring pre-approval is to give an employer the option of choosing to have work done now, at overtime rates, or leaving it for later when another employee can perform it at straight time during their regular shift. As the employer requires the pre-watch rounds and changeover duties to be performed by the watchkeeper who is about to take over the watch and the employer has scheduled two 12 hour watches in each 24 hour period, these tasks can only be done outside of the watchkeeper's regular 12 hour shift. In other words, the Board found that the requirement to perform the duties is effectively the prior approval.

While the Board's decision was with respect to these two individual grievances on Appendix H vessels, the analysis would be equally applicable to all Officers who are being required to report early for a watch, in order to complete changeover duties outside of their regularly scheduled shift. On a go-forward basis, Officers in such situations should submit a request for 1 hour of overtime (the minimum as per 30.07(a) of the collective agreement) for each such occurrence. In the event that such overtime payment is denied, please contact your local Guild office for assistance.