



WHAT ARE THE SHIP MASTER'S OBLIGATIONS FOR RESCUE?



WHO IS THE “MASTER” OF A SHIP?

The “master” of a ship is the person we call the “captain” in everyday speech.

“Master” is the official term, frequently used in maritime law. Every major maritime treaty makes specific reference to the duties and authorities of masters.

The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (reg. I/1) defines the “master” simply: “The person having command of a ship”.

WHAT DUTIES DOES THE MASTER HAVE RELATED TO RESCUE?

Under the International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the master has responsibility to assist any persons that are in distress at sea.

(SOLAS, reg. 33).

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) further requires governments to enforce this duty on masters in command of ships flying their flag.

(UNCLOS, art. 98).

WHAT DUTIES DOES THE MASTER HAVE RELATED TO RESCUE?

The master of a ship also has discretion to decide against providing assistance, if such assistance would put his or her ship or crew in serious danger.

Where assistance is declined, the master must specify the reason in the log book.

(SOLAS, reg. 33).



3.

CAN COMMERCIAL OR FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS PREVENT RESCUE?

**No, commercial or financial considerations do not affect
the master's responsibility to rescue.**

**The ship owner, charterer, other company, or commercial
contract cannot interfere with the master's obligation to protect
the safety of life at sea.**

(SOLAS, reg. 33).

4.

WHAT ARE THE MASTER'S RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS RESCUED MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES?

**Masters must treat rescued persons with humanity,
including providing for initial medical needs.**

*(SOLAS, reg. 33-6; International Convention on Maritime Search
and Rescue, annex chapter 1).*

WHAT ARE THE MASTER'S RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS RESCUED MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES?

**Under the coordination of relevant states and their MRCCs,
to disembark rescued persons**

in a place of safety,

**where their basic needs can be met and they do not face a
well-founded fear of persecution or have substantial grounds
to believe that they would face torture.**



**Everyone at sea can play a role in
preventing shipwrecks**

Find more information and resources at

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