

SIOFA Guidelines for evaluating and approving Electronic Observer Programs for scientific data collection

‘electronic observer program’ means a program that uses electronic monitoring equipment in place of, or in conjunction with, a human observer or human observers on board a vessel that is capable of generating, storing and transmitting data to competent authorities¹.

In the context of the above definition the SC developed guidelines for evaluating and approving electronic observer programs for scientific data collection.

1. During the early stages of the development of an electronic observer program the Scientific Committee should review how the proposed program can satisfy each data standard field. The SC noted that current electronic monitoring equipment cannot collect all data fields specified in CMM2016/02. Given this situation, the SC agreed that electronic monitoring can currently complement rather than replace on-board observers. Consequently, it is not feasible for these guidelines to assist with evaluation and approval of electronic monitoring programs. In the interim, until electronic monitoring programs are fully developed, the Scientific Committee can only review how electronic monitoring equipment satisfies each data field specified in CMM2016/02 rather than provide an evaluation of an Electronic Observer Program. The approval of collection of data fields by electronic monitoring should free-up observers to undertake other observation activities.
2. The proposing Contracting Party, CNCP or PFE should provide the Scientific Committee with a working paper that demonstrates for each proposed data standard field, that the electronic observer program provides equivalent or better information than an at sea observer.
3. Evidence to substantiate the performance of the proposed electronic observer program should include a comparison between the electronic observer program and an at-sea observer for each data standard field as appropriate. This should include information demonstrating direct measurement (e.g. metering of vessel hydraulics to record start and end times of an operation) or comparisons between at-sea observer collected data and the electronic observer program derived data
4. The proposal should describe measures in place to address potential system failure.
5. The proposal should outline how the electronic observer program will be audited to ensure that it continues to provide equivalent or better data than an at-sea observer once approved.
6. If the electronic observer program changes substantially, such as with technology development, the proposing member would need to resubmit to the Scientific Committee a new application for evaluation and approval.

¹ CMM 2016/01 (d)

The SC will evaluate proposed electronic observer programs to collect scientific data, during its regular meetings, through an intersessional working group or intersessionally as directed by the Chair.