

CORONAVIRUS (Covid-19) Contingency Plan and Guidelines for the services provided to Seafarers and Shipowners by the MCA.

The department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) are leading the UK government response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

You can get up-to-date information about the situation in the UK on:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

MCA's response and advice to Industry on services provided are as detailed below:

Joining and Repatriation of seafarers from vessels.

The areas affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the strategy implementation by countries affected by it is constantly evolving.

Many Governments have now introduced national and local restrictions including:

- Delayed port clearance;
- Prevention of crew or passengers from embarking or disembarking (preventing shore leave and crew changes);
- Prevention of discharging or loading cargo or stores, or taking on fuel, water, food and supplies; and
- Imposition of quarantine or refusal of port entry to ships (in extreme cases).

Countries have resorted to screening of passengers at airports and various ports have implemented pre-boarding screenings, including mandatory health check questionnaire accompanied with a thermal scan test. The Master should contact the local port authority to enquire if crew repatriation is available.

Safe Manning Document (SMD) and exemptions to SMD

The SMD will be issued in a digital format. Where it can be demonstrated that a crew member is required to depart a vessel due to the virus and the ship owner/operator is unable to replace them, exemptions to SMD will be considered on a case by case basis. Each request should be supported by risk assessment from the company.

Issue or Revalidation of a UK Certificate of Competency where a seafarer is unable to disembark a vessel

Any seafarer who has completed the requirements for the issue of UK CoC but is unable to post their application to the MCA should send a scanned application form to the MCA. Providing the supporting evidence meets the requirements, the seafarer will be issued with a Temporary CoC valid for a period of 6 months. Email addresses can be found [here](#).

A similar approach will be taken for a seafarer whose CoC expires whilst they are on board. The required documentary evidence should be submitted to the MCA by email where we will issue a digital temporary certificate valid for a period of 6 months. Email revalidation@mcga.gov.uk using form [MSF 4201](#).

Issue of Certificate of Equivalent Competency (CEC) where a seafarer is unable to disembark a vessel

CRAs can be issued in digital format from an application that is emailed to the MCA (cec@mcga.gov.uk). If a Master's temporary CEC expires whilst serving on board, then provided that the CoC is valid, another temporary CEC valid for a period of six months will be issued.

Seafarers with UK Certificates of Competency (CoC) working on UK flagged vessels, who are unable to disembark a vessel

For a UK CoC holder, the MCA can provide an exemption for those officers who are on board a vessel and their safety training has expired. This will be based on a self-declaration (as per the STCW 2010 Manila amendments requirements). A similar approach will be followed if a seafarer's CoC expires whilst on board. The CoC will be extended for a period of 6 months. Ship owners/operators should email exams@mcga.gov.uk to request this exemption or for CoC extension requests.

Seafarers with UK CoC working on Non-UK flagged vessels

For a UK CoC holder, the MCA can provide an exemption for those officers who are on board a vessel and their safety training has expired. This will be based on a self-declaration (as per the STCW 2010 Manila amendments requirements). Ship owners/operators should email exams@mcga.gov.uk to request this exemption.

Seafarers with UK Certificate of Equivalent Competency (CEC) working on UK flagged vessels

The expiry date of a CEC is the same as the expiry date of a seafarers original CoC. If required, the MCA will liaise with the parent administration regarding requests for an extension of a CoC for a seafarer holding a CEC on a UK registered vessels. The MCA will issue CECs against any extension to CoCs (temporary or full). Ship owners/operators should email cec@mcga.gov.uk to request this exemption.

Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC)

Seafarers who are onboard vessel beyond their contracts for reasons connected with the Covid-19 virus.

The company should ensure that seafarers are kept informed of the risks of infection, reasons why they are required to stay on board, any measures being taken for their protection, and arrangements for their repatriation.

A valid Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA) must remain in force until repatriation. If any of the SEAs have expired, they must be extended, or new ones issued. The company need to ensure that the seafarers are sent home at the first available opportunity. Evidence should be retained by both the seafarer and the company clearly demonstrating the reason why the seafarer was asked to extend their contract.

Shipowner liability

If in doubt, shipping companies should contact their financial security provider to confirm that insurance or other financial security is in place for additional costs pending repatriation (e.g. isolation), medical care, and any costs and expense of crew transfer for suspected cases.

Under MLC provisions relating to repatriation and medical care, shipowners remain liable for costs pending repatriation (e.g. isolation), medical care, and any costs or expense of crew transfer for suspected cases.

Sea-time Matters

Sea time on any vessel which is fully crewed and operational, although not working cargo will be accepted at full rate towards the issue or revalidation of a UK CoC.

Crew who are directly involved in the operation of the vessel that is in warm lay-up will have their service accepted at full rate towards a UK CoC (issue or revalidation).

In the case of cadets who are not able to join vessels due to travel restrictions, alternative sea time for up to 1 month would be accepted by MCA – proposals should be emailed to exams@mcga.gov.uk

- For Deck cadets, up-to 1 month of sea time will be accepted on domestic vessels e.g. Domestic passenger ferries in categorised waters which are over 500 GT.
- For engineering cadets, workshop training or simulator training for 1 month would be accepted in lieu of 1-month sea-service.

The Seafarer Training and Certification Branch will issue Notices of Eligibility (NOE) to candidates who are up to one month short of the required sea time (if a seafarer is over this allowance, we look at it on a case by case basis). Seafarers can take oral exams once they have a NOE, however the full CoC will not be issued until the full sea service requirement has been met.

Medical fitness certificates

The Merchant Shipping (Maritime Labour Convention) (Medical Certification) Regulations 2010 permit a seafarer whose medical fitness certificate expires during a voyage in a location where it is not possible to obtain a medical fitness certificate accepted for working on a UK ship to continue working for up to three months. If in exceptional circumstances this period is likely to be exceeded, the shipowner should contact the MCA on seafarer.sh@mcga.gov.uk for advice.

Survey and Certification of UK Flagged Vessels

Where surveys are due on vessels located overseas and it becomes difficult for attendance by a surveyor either MCA or RO, the MCA will consider the extension of mandatory statutory survey windows by issuance of short-term certificates, on a case by case basis. Operators are advised to make requests to their Customer Service Managers in good time before the expiry date to avoid Port State Control issues.

Additional information relevant to the Maritime industry can also be found at these websites (Please note: the list is not exhaustive):

[International Maritime Health Association](#)

[World Health Organisation](#)

[International Maritime Organisation](#)

[International Chamber of Shipping](#)