

CORONAVIRUS Contingency Plan and Guidelines for Seafarers – The MCAs response and Advice to Industry on Areas of Operation which may be affected.

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>

Additional information relevant to the Maritime industry can be found on (the list is not considered exhaustive):

[International Maritime Health Association](#)

[World Health Organisation](#)

[International Maritime Organisation](#)

[International Chamber of Shipping](#)

Joining and Repatriation of seafarers from vessels.

The areas affected by the 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 tests with a thermal scan machine. The master should contact the local port authority to ensure if crew repatriation is available.

Safe Manning Document (SMD) and exemptions to SMD

SMD will be issued in a digital format. Where it can be demonstrated that a crew member is required to depart a vessel owing to the virus and unable to be replaced, exemptions to SMD will be considered on a case by case basis and should be supported by risk assessments 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 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 on the application form search www.gov.uk for “How to apply for a UK deck certificate of competency”.

Similar approach will be followed if a seafarer whose CoC expires whilst they are on board. Provided the required documentary evidence can be submitted to the MCA by email we will issue a digital temporary certificate valid for a period of 6 months. Email revalidation@mcga.gov.uk using form [MSF 4258](#).

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

CRA's can be issued in digital format from application that are emailed to the MCA (cec@mcga.gov.uk). If Master's temporary CEC expires whilst serving on board, then provided that the CoC is valid, another temporary CEC valid for a period of 6 months will be issued.

MLC for seafarers who are onboard vessel beyond their contracts for reasons connected with the virus

The Seafarers Employment Agreements (SEA) should remain valid. The company should explain to the seafarers as to why they need to remain on board. If any of the SEA's have expired, they need to 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.

Financial Security

Shipping companies should contact their insurance provider confirming that insurance or other financial security is in place for the cost and expense of crew transfer for suspected cases.

Seafarers with UK Certificate of Competency working on UK flagged vessels who are unable to disembark a vessel

For a UK CoC holder, we can do 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 manilla amendments requirements). Similar approach will be followed if a seafarers CoC expires whilst on board. The CoC's will be extended for a period of 6 months. Ship owners/operators should email exams@mcga.gov.uk to request this exemption or CoC extension request.

Seafarers with UK Certificate of Competency working on Non-UK flagged vessels

For a UK CoC holder, we can do 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 manilla amendments requirements). Ship owners/operators should email exams@mcga.gov.uk to request this exemption.

Seafarers with UK CeC working on UK flagged vessels

The validity of CeC is in line with the validity of the CoC of the seafarer. MCA will try to liaise with the parent administration regarding request for extension of CoC's for Seafarers with non-UK CoC's on UK flag vessels. The MCA will issue CECs against any extension to CoCs (temporary or full). Ship owners/operators should email exams@mcga.gov.uk to request this extension.

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 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.

In 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 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.

Seafarer training branch will issue Notice of Eligibility (NOE) to candidates who are up to 1 month short of the sea time requirement. Seafarers can take oral exams once they have a NOE, however the full CoC will not be issued until the requisite sea-service requirement has been met.

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.