



Marine Safety Information Bulletin

Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
Commercial Regulations & Standards Directorate
2703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE, STOP 7501
Washington, DC 20593-7501

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E-Mail: OutbreakQuestions@uscg.mil

COVID-19 – Mariner Credentials

Extension of Merchant Mariner Credential Endorsements, Medical Certificates and Course Approvals

This MSIB updates guidance concerning mariner credentials, medical certificates and course approvals, and the action being taken by the Coast Guard due to the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes (COVID-19). We are doing this in keeping with national guidance to meet the challenge of this disease and in response to a number of questions and concerns raised by the maritime industry and mariners. The provisions in this MSIB are consistent with the Executive Order on Regulatory Relief to Support Economic Recovery issued on May 19, 2020.

The Coast Guard has also been consulting with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and other administrations to ensure alignment with respect to the extension of endorsements issued in accordance with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW). We are taking a pragmatic approach consistent with the IMO Secretary General's circular Letter No.4204/Add.5 dated March 17, 2020.

To mitigate the impact to the seafarers and the industry caused by the novel coronavirus disease COVID-19, the Coast Guard is taking the following actions:

- **Regional Exam Centers and Monitoring Units.** Regional Examination Centers and Monitoring Units will remain closed until further notice. Mariners with questions may contact the National Maritime Center (NMC) by calling the Customer Service Center at 1-888-IASKNMC, emailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or through the NMC online chat system.
- **National Endorsements:** Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMC) and Medical Certificates (National Endorsements only) that expire between March 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020 are extended until December 31, 2020. Mariners who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential with a copy of this notice. This measure relaxes the requirement to carry an unexpired medical certificate and not the actual medical standards. It is important that mariners with disqualifying medical conditions do not sail.
- **STCW Endorsements:** MMCs with STCW endorsements that expire between March 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020 are extended until December 31, 2020. Mariners who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential with a copy of this notice.
- **STCW Medical Certificates:** STCW Medical Certificates that expire between March 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020 are extended until December 31, 2020. Mariners who are actively working on an expired medical certificate that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired certificate with a copy of this notice. This measure ONLY relaxes the requirement to carry an unexpired STCW medical

certificate and not the actual medical standards. It is important that mariners with disqualifying medical conditions do not sail.

- Additional administrative measures: The following items that expire in between March 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020 are extended until December 31, 2020: Additional Information letters, Qualified Assessor letters, Designated Examiner letters, Approval to Test letters, and mariner training course completion certificates.
- Pilot Annual Physical examinations. 46 USC 7101(e)(3) requires that pilots undergo an annual physical examination each year while holding a credential. The Coast Guard does not intend to enforce this requirement given the current national emergency and the lack of medical care. This measure **ONLY** relaxes the requirement for an annual physical and not the actual medical standards. This posture applies until December 31, 2020 irrespective of when the medical certificate expires. It is important that pilots with disqualifying medical conditions do not sail.
- Course and Program Approvals.
 - Course and program approvals that expire between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020 are extended for six months from their current expiration date. This MISB serves as formal notification of the extension. The NMC will not issue new course approval letters or certificates. NMC will update internal records to ensure the acceptance of course completion certificates issued during the extension and that the website reflects appropriate information.
 - The NMC will continue to work with training providers on a case-by-case basis to implement alternate training delivery methods, including distance learning or blended learning. Approved requests and new requests for alternate training delivery methods will be valid until December 31, 2020 for the knowledge-based online course material. All testing, practical assessments, and labs associated with these courses must be completed no later than 6 months from the completion of the knowledge-based portion of the training. This MSIB serves as the extension for previously approved courses using alternate delivery methods.

Please be aware that these measures may cause a backlog in the processing of credentials and course approvals, especially near the end of the extension dates. Mariners are strongly encouraged to fulfill the requirements and submit their application as early as possible in order to avoid a lapse in their credential. Similarly, training providers need to make every effort to submit their application early to avoid expiration of their current approval.

The NMC may issue additional guidance on these extensions and other administrative measures consistent with this MSIB. This guidance will be posted at <https://www.uscg.mil/nmc/>. If you have questions, visit the NMC website, or contact the NMC Customer Service Center by using the NMC online chat system, by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

Richard Timme, RDML, U.S. Coast Guard, Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy sends