

Republic of the Marshall Islands

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY No. 12-20

To: Owners/Operators, Masters, Nautical Inspectors, Recognized Organizations

Subject: CORONAVIRUS DISEASE UPDATES

Date: 20 March 2020

This Marine Safety Advisory (MSA) supersedes MSA No. 09-20.

1.0 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) is providing the following information and advice on COVID-19 for RMI-flagged vessels and seafarers. This outbreak has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Global surveillance is continual, and cases have been discovered worldwide.

2.0 Vessel Calls in Affected Ports

2.1 WHO remains the primary source of [information](#) for advice on trading and traveling to regions and countries where COVID-19 risks exist. They have stated that, if certain measures are taken, there should be no “unnecessary restrictions of international traffic.” Nevertheless, RMI-flagged vessels are advised to adopt precautionary measures and seek updated information and requirements from local sources prior to making port calls. This is particularly important given the fluid situation and growing restrictions by governments.

2.2 Follow WHO’s standard recommendations to reduce exposure to, and transmission of, the disease, including:

- Cleaning hands frequently by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
- When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue, then immediately throw the tissue away and wash hands;
- Avoiding close contact with anyone who has fever and cough; and
- Avoiding the consumption of raw or undercooked animal products and the cross-contamination of uncooked foods as per good food safety practices.

This MSA expires one (1) year after its issuance, unless otherwise noted, extended, superseded, or revoked.

- 2.3 Limit or restrict access to vessels when calling at affected areas. Under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), steps may be taken to ensure vessel and crew safety. These could include but are not limited to:
- Refusing entry to anyone appearing ill; and
 - Mandating washing or alcohol hand sanitizing regimes for stevedores and others at the base of the gangway.
- 2.4 Scrupulously clean and disinfect the ship according to its cleaning regime, but particularly spaces used by visitors.
- 2.5 Vessels calling at ports in COVID-19 affected areas should consider whether the ship's security plan is correctly implemented, and the crew should be extra vigilant for any stowaways trying to board the ship. It is strongly recommended that a 24-hour security watch be maintained while in port and that additional searches are carried out before departing the port. Specific instructions should be given to watch standers to only allow people to board as required for the ships business. Visitors should not be allowed to access the crew accommodation area without permission and at a minimum an initial screening.
- 2.6 Make certain that there are adequate food, medicines, and fresh water supplies aboard the vessel prior to calling on [highly affected areas](#). This is to preclude any hardships that may arise due to limited or delayed victualling.

3.0 Vessel Inspections and Other Boardings

- 3.1 The Administrator has suspended all cruise ship inspections for three months and continues to suspend all vessel inspections and other boardings in highly affected areas. This will continue to evolve as new highly affected areas are identified.
- 3.2 The Administrator will not inspect vessels arriving from highly affected areas until 15 days (the incubation period) has elapsed from leaving the last highly affected area.
- 3.3 Alternative arrangements for vessel inspections will be available to address and reduce risk. When the traditional in-person inspection is not possible, temporary arrangements will be considered. These temporary arrangements may include postponement, remote interactive inspections, and/or utilization of a temporary self-inspection protocol. These options will be further elaborated on in a new Marine Safety Advisory. If you have an immediate question or concern regarding vessel inspections or boardings, please contact your **regional office** or directly send an email to the respective inspection office as noted below.

Inspections-HK@register-iri.com for those vessels needing to schedule an inspection in China, the Far East, Southeast Asia, Australia, or New Zealand.

Inspections-Busan@register-iri.com for those vessels needing to schedule an inspection in Korea and the Pacific coast of Russia.

Inspections-Dubai@register-iri.com for those vessels needing to schedule an inspection in the Middle East including Red Sea area and Gulf of Aden, India, or Pakistan.

Inspections-Roosendaal@register-iri.com for those vessels needing to schedule an inspection in Northern and Eastern Europe; Western Russia; West, Central, and Southern Africa; or Madagascar.

Inspections-Piraeus@register-iri.com for those vessels needing to schedule an inspection in the Mediterranean, Black Sea, or North Africa.

Inspections-Baltimore@register-iri.com for those vessels needing to schedule an inspection in North, Central, and South America; the Caribbean; Greenland; Guam; or the Hawaiian Islands.

- 3.4 Close cooperation with the regional office coordinating your inspection is greatly appreciated to reduce the risk and minimize the global impact of the virus in the maritime arena.

4.0 Crew Contracts

- 4.1 The Administrator is aware that stringent border control measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 have resulted in operators having difficulty in arranging crew changes and repatriating seafarers when their employment agreements expire. As a result, some seafarers employed to work on RMI-flagged ships may exceed the service period as entered in their seafarer employment agreements (SEA).
- 4.2 The Administrator allows for extended SEAs as provided in RMI Marine Notice [7-052-2](#). It also recognizes in contrast to this position that some port States hold a rigid interpretation that an SEA may not be extended beyond 11 months or its original contract date, if less than that period. The International Transport Federation has [announced](#) that from 17 March to 16 April 2020 it will not challenge a one-month extension to an SEA.
- 4.3 The Administrator is handling these COVID-19 contract and repatriation issues on a case-by-case basis. It encourages dialog between the relevant stakeholders (flag State, shipowner, seafarer, and port State) so that a practicable way forward to an already difficult situation may be taken. While it is important that the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006) is complied with and enforced, ships and crew should not be unreasonably detained or delayed per MLC, 2006, Standard 5.2.1.8, because of the lack of flexibility in this unforeseen circumstance.
- 4.4 Shipowners, managers, and crewing agencies are also instructed to think ahead and prepare for seafarer and crew relief in light of the current circumstances.

5.0 Certificate of Competency/Proficiency and Medical Certification Expiry Extensions

5.1 To alleviate pressures tied to local and national based mitigation measures surrounding COVID-19, the Administrator will grant a general extension for the validity of the following RMI certificates:

- Certificates of Competency (CoCs);
- Certificates of Proficiency (CoPs); and
- Medical Certificates.

5.2 The validity of RMI issued original CoCs and CoPs, which are due to expire, will be granted an extended validity of six months (from date of expiry) or until 1 October 2020.

5.3 The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) Medical Certificates are valid for three months from the expiration date in accordance with STCW Regulation I/9. The validity of STCW Medical Certificates, which are due to expire, are granted an extended validity of six months (from date of expiry) or 01 October 2020.

5.4 The Administrator will honor all extensions of national CoCs and CoPs issued by International Maritime Organization (IMO) White Listed parties by extending RMI Certificates of Endorsement accordingly. Please note that the Administrator cannot extend an endorsement unless the issuing Administration has allowed extension of the underlying CoC.

5.5 Mariners who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential with a copy of this advisory.

5.6 The extended validity has been granted in order to provide sufficient time for seafarers to apply for recertification once this pandemic has ended and to avoid interrupting the critical flow of goods and services during this unprecedented emergency.

6.0 IMO

6.1 With many meetings of the IMO now postponed, including the Legal Committee (LEG) 107, the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) 75 and the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) 102, the Administrator is closely monitoring developments to ascertain when the normal operation of the IMO Headquarters building will resume and postponed meetings are rescheduled. In the meantime, the Administrator is actively participating in efforts to keep the international community informed of measures being taken to address implementation difficulties.

6.2 Ship owners/operators are encouraged to visit the [IMO's press page](#) on COVID-19, which highlights the work of the IMO on advice for IMO Member States, seafarers, and shipping. Relevant circular letters issued to date are listed on the IMO press page, along with links

to a number of external information resources and guidelines. A communication from the IMO Secretary General urging a practical and pragmatic approach, in response to issues like crew changeovers, resupply, repairs, survey and certification, and licensing of seafarers can also be found [here](#).

7.0 Additional Information and Resources

More information, including situational reports and technical guidance, can be found at:

- [WHO Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Outbreak](#)
- [WHO Operational Considerations for Managing COVID-19 Cases/Outbreak on Board Ships](#)
- [United States \(US\) Coast Guard Marine Safety Information Bulletin 01-20](#)
- [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Guidance from China on the Prevention and Control of COVID-19 On Board](#)