

# Republic of the Marshall Islands

## MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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### MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY No. 12-22

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

**Subject: CORONAVIRUS DISEASE UPDATES**

**Date: 31 May 2022**

This Marine Safety Advisory (MSA) supersedes MSA No. 20-21. Most importantly, §5.2 and §5.3 were amended to inform all stakeholders that the validity of certain Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) seafarer documentation has been extended to 31 December 2022.

#### 1.0 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

The 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 persist worldwide.

#### 2.0 Vessel Calls in Affected Ports

- 2.1 WHO remains the primary source of [advice](#) on trading and traveling to regions and countries where COVID-19 risks exist. Their standard recommendations to reduce exposure to, and transmission of, the disease should be followed. Attention is drawn to the WHO interim guidance on “Promoting public health measures in response to COVID-19 on cargo ships and fishing vessels,” “Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases or outbreaks on board ships,” and associated training materials in International Maritime Organization (IMO) Circular Letter No. [4204/Add.34](#).
- 2.2 IMO’s [COVID-19 information page](#), which highlights the work of the IMO in response to the pandemic, provides additional useful advice. It includes communications by Member States informing of local measures/guidance and links to external information resources and guidelines.
- 2.3 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 evolving restrictions by governments.

This MSA is evaluated annually by the Administrator and expires one year after its issuance or renewal unless otherwise noted, superseded, or revoked.

- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 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 Although physical inspections have resumed in most areas, alternative arrangements for vessel inspections remain 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 or remote interactive inspections (see MSA No. [05-21](#) for details). If you have an immediate question or concern regarding vessel inspections or boardings, please contact your **regional office directly** or send an email to the respective inspection office as noted below.

[Inspections-HK@register-iri.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

- 3.2 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.
- 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 instructed to think ahead, prepare, and document for seafarer and crew relief in light of the current circumstances. Documents and communication files can be requested by Port State Control Officers to evaluate the company's effort to relieve crew who are due for relief at previous, current, and future ports.

## **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);
  - Medical Certificates; and
  - Seafarer Identity and Record Books (SIRBs).
- 5.2 The validity of RMI issued original CoCs, CoPs, and SIRBs, which are due to expire, are granted an extended validity to 31 December 2022.
- 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 to 31 December 2022.

- 5.4 The Administrator will honor all extensions of national CoCs and CoPs issued by 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 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.
- 5.7 The Administrator will not issue temporary authorization letters, extensions of Certificate of Receipts of Application (CRA), Urgent Authorizations (UA), Acknowledgements, or dispensations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **6.0 Additional Information and Resources**

More information, including situational reports and technical guidance, can be found at <https://www.register-iri.com/covid-19>.