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Circular Letter No.4260
9 April 2020

To: All IMO Members
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **Communication from the Republic of Finland**

The Government of the Republic of Finland has sent the attached communication, dated 8 April 2020, with the request that it is circulated by the Organization.

8.4.2020

His Excellency Kitack Lim
Secretary-General
International Maritime Organization
4 Albert Embankment
SE1 7SR London
United Kingdom

Subject: Extension of the validity of maritime personnel certificates during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

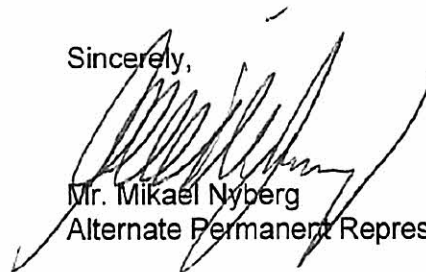
Excellency,

Finland welcomes your invitation for practical and pragmatic approach to the facilitation of maritime traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard Finnish Transport and Communications Agency has adopted special measures for its ships and seafarers serving on board Finnish ships during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With reference to the IMO Circular Letters No.4204/Add.5 (17 March 2020) and No. 4204/Add.5.Rev1 (2 April 2020) please find attached the information bulletin of the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom) regarding renewal of competency and medical certificates during the coronavirus pandemic and Decision Regarding extension of statutory surveys and issuance/endorsement of statutory certificates, including ISM and ISPS, due to COVID-19.

I would appreciate if you could circulate the measures developed by Finland to the attention of the Member States and any interested parties.

Sincerely,



Mr. Mikael Nyberg
Alternate Permanent Representative of Finland to the IMO

Attachments

1. Information bulletin for seafarers and shipping companies: Renewal of competency and medical certificates during the coronavirus pandemic
2. Decision Regarding extension of statutory surveys and issuance/endorsement of statutory certificates, including ISM and ISPS, due to COVID-19

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To: Whom it may concern
From: The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom)

Information bulletin for seafarers and shipping companies: Renewal of competency and medical certificates during the coronavirus pandemic

Published 18.03.2020 13:49

The coronavirus pandemic affects ships' crew changes as well as the organisation of seafarers' training courses or refresher training courses, which may in turn have an impact on renewals of competency and medical certificates. The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom) may, when justified by an overriding reason, permit seafarers to continue serving on board without a valid medical certificate or renew a certificate of competency on the basis of an application.

The coronavirus pandemic presents substantial challenges for international travel, making crew changes difficult or impossible. Restrictions on gatherings are preventing the organisation of seafarers' training courses and refresher courses. As the pandemic continues, seafarers working on ships will find themselves unable to renew their competency certificates. Seafarers' medical certificates may also expire during this time.

Renewal of seafarers' medical certificates

Under section 10 of the Act on Medical Fitness Examinations of Seafarers (1171/2010), the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency may, for compelling reasons, grant a seafarer a permit to temporarily serve on board without a valid medical certificate, if the medical certificate has recently expired. Such a permit is valid until the next port of call where an examination can be performed, but no longer than three months. In such cases the shipowner must contact the team responsible for maritime qualifications at merimiesyksikko@traficom.fi. Please note that this only applies to vessels flying the flag of Finland. In other cases, the shipowner should contact the flag State in question.

Renewal of maritime certificates of competency or proficiency

If a seafarer's competency or proficiency certificate expires while serving on board, the seafarer or shipowner must apply for its renewal. This is done using the usual application (not Traficom's e-services), which should be sent by email to merimiesyksikko@traficom.fi. The application should be accompanied by all the attachments the applicant is able to include as well as a description of the situation. Traficom will process the applications on a case-by-case basis, take the relevant measures and prepare the necessary documents. Traficom is working to mitigate disruption to the activities of the Finnish maritime transport sector.

As the coronavirus situation is constantly evolving, it may be necessary in the future to issue new guidelines with regard to seafarers' competency and proficiency matters. Traficom will update these instructions as the situation develops and make the necessary decisions in accordance with the

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relevant legislation. Traficom is also actively monitoring international guidelines related to this matter.

Enquiries:

By email to [merimiesyksikko\(at\)traficom.fi](mailto:merimiesyksikko(at)traficom.fi)

To: Whom it may concern

From: The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom)

Regarding extension of statutory surveys and issuance/endorsement of statutory certificates, including ISM and ISPS, due to COVID-19

1 Background

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease in 2019 (COVID-19), The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom) has received inquiries from shipowners and Recognized Organizations (RO) regarding the postponement of surveys and extending the validity of mandatory certificates, including ISM and ISPS audits.

Because of the current situation, the Traficom considers the COVID-19 outbreak to be a *force majeure* situation.

2 Instructions to ROs

Shipowner has to take all possible measures to ensure that statutory certificates are kept valid. If ROs do not have the opportunity to carry out required surveys and inspections. Shipowners may ask postponement of surveys and extending the validity of mandatory certificates from RO.

Traficom has decided that certificates and surveys, which are expiring in near future, may be granted a 3-month extension. This includes also postponement of bottom inspections as a result of unavailable dry-dock facilities. To have a survey postponed and/or a ship certificate extended, inquiry must be made to the RO, which will coordinate issue with The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom).

ROs must keep track of all extensions to make sure that necessary supervision and certifications will be carried out when the new deadlines expire.

3 Surveys and Audits and Certificates which are under Traficom's responsibility

As a general rule, all surveys will be postponed at the moment, maximum of 3 months.

Any questions related to surveys or ship certificates contact ita.valvonta@traficom.fi and lansi.valvonta@traficom.fi

20.3.2020

To: Whom it may concern

From: The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom)

4 Documentation

This document and documents from RO and Traficom must be made available on board and shall be presented upon request at supervisions and port State controls, etc.



Alekski Uttula

Head of Inspections and Surveys