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## BERMUDA MERCHANT SHIPPING GUIDANCE NOTICE

### COVID-19 – Arrangements for Seafarer Documents

**This Notice is intended for:** Ship Owners, Managers, Captains and Officers

**References:**

**Bermuda Shipping Notice 2019-015** STCW Endorsements

**Summary:**

This notice is to inform Owners, Managers, Crewing Agents and crew of Bermuda registered ships that the Bermuda Shipping and Maritime Authority (BSMA) is aware that many are experiencing difficulties in receiving or applying for their national COC's, Bermuda Endorsements, Bermuda Dischargebooks or conducting STCW training before the date required due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This notice provides guidance on the steps to be taken in this situation.

This Notice was issued on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020

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#### 1. Introduction

- (1) BSMA have existing instruction for ship managers and crew agents in the form of Bermuda Shipping Notice 2019-015 which provides detailed guidance on officer certification and the issue of Bermuda Endorsements.
  - a. This guidance explains the process of applying for a Bermuda Endorsement, and receiving the Certificate for Receipt of Application (CRA)
- (2) This guidance notice provides further detail on the following documentation and certification which may have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic:
  - a. Bermuda issue Seafarer Dischargebooks for documenting sea service
  - b. Expiring Seafarer medical certification
  - c. Expiring STCW short courses and specific training
  - d. Expiring National COC's

#### 2. Bermuda Endorsements and actions taken

- (1) BSMA has taken steps to ensure that Bermuda remains able to issue all seafarer documents during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are however, aware that external factors are impacting on this process.

- (2) Part of our process for issue of Bermuda Endorsements includes verification of the Certificate of Competency (COC) with the original issuing authority. We are aware that this process may be impacted by government shutdowns.
  - a. In cases where it is not possible to verify the original COC BSMA will issue a six-month, short-term Bermuda Endorsement.
  - b. Once the international situation stabilizes with regard to COVID-19, these will be administratively replaced with full-term Bermuda Endorsements once they have been verified.
- (3) While it remains possible for BSMA to issue and send the documents by courier, we realize that it may be difficult for some of our clients to receive hardcopy documents due to the current conditions.
  - a. BSMA will respond to the applicant with a scanned copy of each document issued - either a full-time Bermuda Endorsement or, in the case described above, a short-term Bermuda Endorsement.
  - b. This guidance document should be retained on board all Bermuda ships to document for Port State authorities that BSMA intends for the scanned version to be accepted as proof of a valid Bermuda endorsement, during the current period of global turmoil.**
- (4) Please note that the application process is unchanged and remains as detailed in Bermuda Shipping Notice 2019-015.

### **3. Bermuda Seafarer Discharge Books**

- (1) BSMA issue a Seafarer discharge book for the purpose of recording sea service and seafarer identification.
  - a. There is no change to the process for making an application for a Seafarer discharge book
  - b. We acknowledge that there may be delays in shipping or receiving the hardcopy discharge book due to individual client current circumstances
  - c. To mitigate this, upon completion of the document a scan of the picture page of the discharge book will be created and sent to the original applicant email.
- (2) There may be associated difficulties in recording sea service due to delays in receiving a Bermuda discharge book.
  - a. Clients are reminded that it is always acceptable to record sea service using a certificate of discharge (Form number DIS 1) which can be downloaded from 'Seafarer Documents' found on our website:  
<https://www.bermudashipping.bm/downloads/>

### **4. Medical Certification**

- (1) BSMA is aware that many seafarers are having difficulty renewing their medical

certification due to travel restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. This applies to both seafarers trying to join the ship and seafarers already on board.

- a. Many other Administrations have issued guidance relating to extension of Seafarer medicals issued under the authority of their jurisdiction. BSMA will recognize any such extension either published or issued specifically to an individual.
- b. If the Administration under which a seafarer medical was issued has made no such extension, BSMA consider the medical to remain valid for service on board for a period of six months from the printed expiry date on the document.  
**This guidance note should be kept on board for presentation to any port State inspectors to substantiate this allowance.**

## **5. STCW Short Course and Other Specific Training**

- (1) Seafarers may be experiencing difficulty in re-validating STCW short course or specific training due to travel restrictions and other measure taken by national governments to limit the spread of COVID-19.
  - a. Some jurisdictions have administratively extended validity of STCW short courses for an interim period. Where this guidance exists BSMA will accept such allowances.
  - b. Where jurisdictions have not published such guidance this notice shall serve as notification that BSMA will accept any short course or STCW certificate which was due to expire during as being valid for an additional six months past the expiry date of the original document.

## **6. National COC's**

- (1) BSMA is aware that seafarers may have trouble revalidating national COC's during this period.
  - a. It is the responsibility of the issuing Administration to extend the validity of the seafarer's COC.
  - b. BSMA will recognize any administrative extension or blanket extension published by one of the Administrations (countries) accepted by BSMA.
  - c. An existing Bermuda Endorsement which is referencing a COC which has been extended by any method should be considered to remain valid until the expiry of the referenced COC.

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