

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

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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\(at\)traficom.fi](mailto:merimiesyksikko(at)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\(at\)traficom.fi](mailto:merimiesyksikko(at)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:

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