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Circular Letter No.4383/Add.1  
22 November 2021

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

Subject: **Communication from the Government of the Republic of Singapore**

The Government of the Republic of Singapore sent the attached communication, dated 22 November 2021, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.

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## UPDATE OF SINGAPORE'S EFFORTS ON CREW CHANGE AND VACCINATION OF SEAFARERS

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22 NOVEMBER 2021

1 Seafarers play an essential role in keeping the global trade and supply chains functioning. As a major transshipment hub situated alongside one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, Singapore recognises the need for us to do our part and remains committed to ensure the well-being of seafarers. This memo updates on Singapore's effort to facilitate crew change and vaccinate seafarers.

### Facilitating Safe Crew Change

2 The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the mobility of seafarers. At the height of the crew change crisis, an estimated 400,000 seafarers were stranded aboard their ships. To alleviate the severe mental and economic distress faced by seafarers, Singapore has been facilitating crew change since March 2020, despite the imposition of pandemic-related travel restrictions globally. To date, Singapore has facilitated close to 190,000 crew changes, nearly all of which involved foreign seafarers, from more than 9,600 ships.

3 Singapore constantly reviews and calibrate our crew change policies, taking into account the evolving COVID-19 situation globally. We now allow fully vaccinated seafarers from specific countries/regions under the Vaccinated Travel Lane to sign-on in Singapore without serving quarantine. The latest set of requirements can be found in the annexed Port Marine Circular 39 of 2021. Any subsequent updates will be available at <https://www.mpa.gov.sg/web/portal/home/port-of-singapore/circulars-and-notices/port-marine-circulars>.

4 Beyond facilitating crew change on our shores, Singapore is also keen to support fellow Member States' efforts to conduct safe crew change. We have shared our crew change protocols with fellow Member States in IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.22/Rev.2. Together with the shipping industry and unions, we also co-founded the Shipping Tripartite Alliance Resilience (STAR) Taskforce<sup>1</sup> in August 2020,

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<sup>1</sup> The STAR Taskforce is led by the Singapore Shipping Association, and comprises MPA, the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU), the Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), and the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC). It also has the support of ports from Abu Dhabi, Antwerp, Barcelona, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Sines, and Vancouver, as well as international maritime organisations such as the Global Maritime Forum Maritime Industry Crew Change Taskforce, INTERTANKO, Norwegian Shipowners' Association, and World Shipping Council. With a total funding contribution of about SGD

to help crew-supplying States to develop safe and scalable “corridors” for crew change under the CrewSafe audit program. The STAR Taskforce has supported the establishment of over 30 CrewSafe accredited facilities in India, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. More information on the CrewSafe audit program is available at <https://www.ssa.org.sg/news-publications/sg-star-fund>.

## Providing Vaccination for Seafarers

5 Vaccination is key in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the vital role seafarers play and the risks they face during the course of their work, Singapore has prioritised the vaccination of seafarers and maritime personnel. We have adopted a phased approach, starting with the vaccination of both local and foreign resident maritime personnel and seafarers working in our port in January 2021. After fully vaccinating more than 37,800 personnel, i.e. more than 90% of those eligible, we expanded the offer of vaccination to non-resident foreign seafarers working in Singapore for prolonged periods in August 2021. To date, more than 8,000 non-resident foreign seafarers have received at least one dose of vaccination in Singapore.

6 Having refined our vaccination protocols<sup>2</sup> and to further support global efforts to vaccinate seafarers, we are now offering vaccination to seafarers onboard ocean-going vessels calling at Singapore or signing on to ships in Singapore, regardless of their nationality. To register for the vaccination programme, please visit <https://go.gov.sg/mpa-icc-seavax>.

7 Singapore had earlier shared our vaccination protocol and experiences with fellow Member States through IMO Circular Letter No.4383 in February 2021. We hope that this provides Member States with useful information in developing protocols for seafarer vaccination.

## Emerging Stronger Together

8 Cooperation between States as well as industry stakeholders is important in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. We must come together and act fast to support our seafarers, who are working tirelessly to keep global supply chains moving. Singapore remains committed in this endeavour and looks forward to working with like-minded Member States and industry stakeholders to advance this cause.

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2 million (about USD 1.5 million), it is the first international tripartite alliance to work with stakeholders in seafaring nations on solutions for safe crew change.

<sup>2</sup> More details on our vaccination protocol can be found at <https://www.ssa.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Guidebook-on-Seafarers-Vaccination-in-the-Port-of-Singapore.pdf>





MARITIME AND PORT AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE

PORT MARINE CIRCULAR  
NO. 39 OF 2021

25 October 2021

Shipping Community

**ENHANCEMENTS TO CREW CHANGE FOR CARGO SHIPS IN THE PORT OF SINGAPORE AND APPLICATION FOR VACCINATION**

**Requirements for crew change**

1. This circular supersedes Port Marine Circular no.15 and 38 of 2021.
2. In view of the evolving COVID-19 situation globally, MPA has enhanced our crew change requirements to safeguard the wellbeing of seafarers undergoing crew change in Singapore as well as Singapore's populace.
3. MPA will continue to consider the following circumstances for crew change applications:
  - (a) crew whose employment contract has expired;
  - (b) additional crew on board whose sign-off would not affect the safe manning of the ship;
  - (c) change of crew due to the sale or purchase of ship;
  - (d) personnel who are not part of the ship's crew such as superintendents and service engineers;
  - (e) compassionate grounds e.g. death of family member; or
  - (f) the crew is no longer medically fit to work onboard the ship.

4. The requirements for signing-on and -off in Singapore are as follows:

### Sign-on

- (a) In general, sign-on crew are required to serve Stay-Home-Notice (SHN) in the crew's originating country/region in the period<sup>1</sup> immediately prior to his/her departure flight/ferry to Singapore. The crew should be completely isolated in a room with a dedicated toilet with strictly no interaction with others (including family members) at his/her place of residence, or serve the SHN in a dedicated facility/hotel. Please refer to ICA's website (<https://safetravel.ica.gov.sg/wphl/SHN-and-swab-summary>) for the latest list of countries/regions and their respective SHN period.
- (b) Fully vaccinated<sup>2</sup> crew from specific countries/regions under the Vaccinated Travel Lane<sup>3</sup> may sign-on without serving SHN.
- (c) The crew must have a negative result from a COVID-19 test (polymerase chain reaction (PCR) type) taken at a government-approved or ISO 15189-accredited testing facility at his/her originating country not more than **48 hours** prior to departure for Singapore.
- (d) The crew must be certified fit-to-travel by a doctor at his/her originating country not more than 24 hours prior to departure for Singapore.
- (e) Sign-on crew shall have MPA's Final No Objection email prior to departure from his/her SHN location.
- (f) During the entire crew change process, including during the journey to Singapore, the crew should not be in a group of more than five (5) persons, and must remain in the same group. There must be no interactions between groups.
- (g) Unvaccinated crew or fully vaccinated crew should only join his/her ship not more than two (2) days or three (3) days respectively before the date of the ship's final departure from Singapore. For ships departing for sea trial and returning to Singapore, the date of departure for sea trial will not be considered the date of the ship's final departure.
- (h) Unvaccinated crew shall only join the ship in Singapore after all high-risk<sup>4</sup> shore-based personnel have completed their work on board and disembarked the ship.
- (i) Meet-and-greet services must be arranged for sign-on crew arriving at Changi Airport, to escort the crew from the moment they disembark the plane to the point where they are handed over to the agent for the direct transfer to the ship or designated holding facility.
- (j) Crew who have recovered from COVID-19 must submit documentary proof of his/her past diagnosis of COVID-19 based on the **earliest positive** PCR test result. If the date of the positive PCR test result is **21 days or fewer** before the date of arrival in Singapore, he/she will not be approved for crew

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<sup>1</sup> Crew shall not be transferred to another location/region to do PCR test as he/she shall carry out the SHN in the same location as the PCR medical facility.

<sup>2</sup> Crew must have been fully vaccinated in their country/region of departure or Singapore. An individual is considered fully vaccinated 14 days after he/she has received the full regimen of Pfizer-BioNTech/Comirnaty, Moderna or WHO EUL Vaccines.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to <https://safetravel.ica.gov.sg/vtl/requirements-and-process> for the list of countries.

<sup>4</sup> High-risk shore-based personnel are persons that interact closely with ship crew in an enclosed space on board such as repair vendors, equipment service providers and superintendents.

change. If the date of positive PCR test result is more than 21 days before the date of arrival in Singapore, he/she shall comply with the above sign-on requirements.

### **Sign-off**

- (a) The crew must not have gone ashore in the last 14 days before disembarking the ship, must have remained well and not had contact with any known or suspected case of COVID-19 throughout that period.
- (b) The crew must refrain from interacting with shore-based personnel at previous ports of call in the last 14 days.
- (c) The crew must be certified fit-to-travel by a doctor in Singapore not more than 24 hours before disembarking the ship. Tele-medicine can be used to obtain a fit-to-travel assessment and certification. MPA will accept fit-to-travel certificates issued by Singapore Medical Council-fully registered doctors meeting the requirements in **Annex A**.
- (d) During the entire crew change process, the crew should not be in a group of more than five (5) persons, and must remain in the same group. There must be no interactions between groups.
- (e) Crew subjected to serology test shall remain onboard until production of a negative COVID-19 serology test result.

### **Designated crew change holding facilities in Singapore**

5. Unvaccinated sign-on crew and sign-off crew may stay at the designated holding facilities in Singapore for up to 24 hours. Fully vaccinated crew can stay up to 72 hours. Please refer to **Annex B** for details of the designated holding facilities.

### **CrewSafe accredited facility**

6. The Singapore Shipping Tripartite Alliance Resilience Fund Taskforce (SFTF) has developed a CrewSafe audit programme that endeavours to assist crew source nations to bring a higher level of confidence and quality control checks into crew change processes such as quarantine/holding, medical and swabbing facilities. Please refer to this website (<https://www.ssa.org.sg/news-publications/sg-star-fund>) for more information regarding the CrewSafe audit programme and a list of CrewSafe accredited facilities.

7. For sign-on crew who undergo the protocol under these CrewSafe accredited facilities located overseas, his/her crew change application may be given the following concessions:

- (a) Submission of crew change application must be made at least 7 days in advance, instead of 10 days.
- (b) If a sign-on crew undergoing the CrewSafe protocol is cancelled, direct replacement for this crew will be allowed if the replacement has been undergoing CrewSafe protocol for the same required duration, instead of having to re-submit a new application and re-start the process.
- (c) At Singapore, sign-on crew who had undergone the CrewSafe protocol may stay at the designated holding facilities for up to 5 days, if required.

## **Holding areas at Marine South Pier and West Coast Pier**

8. All crew that utilise Marina South Pier (MSP) or West Coast Pier (WCP) shall remain at the designated holding areas while waiting to clear immigration. Should the holding area be full, the crew shall remain in their private transportation.
9. For sign-off crew, the private transportation shall be ready and waiting so that the crew can depart MSP/WCP immediately upon clearing immigration and do not need to crowd up the holding area.
10. Agents and appointed drivers are responsible for ensuring that the crew remain in the holding area or private vehicle at all times. At no time should the crew be loitering outside the holding area and interacting with the general public.

## **Precautionary measures for service providers facilitating crew change**

11. Service providers that facilitate crew change in Singapore shall comply with the minimum level of personal protective equipment (PPE) as follows:
  - Meet-and-greet staff shall don PPE in accordance with the prevailing requirements set by the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore and Changi Airport Group.
  - Land transport drivers shall don full PPE (N95 mask, gloves, gown, face shield) when transporting crew between the airport and vessel.
  - Launch boat operators shall don full PPE (N95 mask, gloves, gown, face shield) when transporting crew between the pier and vessel.
12. Land transport drivers and launch boat operators shall be on 3-Day Fast and Easy Testing (“FET”) RRT regime using Antigen Rapid Test (“ART”). Details of the RRT regime can be found at sector specific requirements under the maritime sector at <https://www.gobusiness.gov.sg/safemanagement/sector/>.
13. All crew shall be transferred directly from the airport/ferry terminal to the vessel/holding facilities/vaccination centre and vice versa ***without any detour***.
14. Land transport drivers and launch boat operators shall keep all windows open when ferrying sign-on/off crew, as far as practicable. They shall always maintain safe distancing and shall not handle the crew’s belongings at any time. The seats and other frequently touched surfaces shall be disinfected<sup>5</sup> after each trip.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to advisory on surface cleaning and disinfection for COVID-19 (<https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/public-cleanliness/environmental-cleaning-guidelines/advisories/advisory-on-surface-cleaning-and-disinfection-for-covid-19>)

15. The agent shall charter a dedicated launch boat for conveyance of sign-on/off crew between the pier and vessel. No other personnel (e.g. boarding agents, technicians) shall take the same launch boat as the sign-on/off crew.

### COVID-19 Pre-Departure Testing in Singapore

16. MPA notes that some countries require travellers to take a COVID-19 pre-departure test (PDT) and present a valid negative test result before they are allowed to transit through or enter. Similar requirements are also imposed by some airlines before allowing travellers to board their flights.

17. MPA has been facilitating COVID-19 pre-departure testing for sign-off crew in Singapore on a case-by-case basis. **Please be reminded that MPA's approval shall be sought for signing-off crew to take PDT in Singapore.**

18. For crew change applications where the sign-off crew requires PDT before departing Singapore, in addition to the existing sign-off requirements as stated in paragraph 4 of this circular, the sign-off crew that require PDT in Singapore shall produce a negative test result from a COVID-19 PCR test taken at the vessel's last port of call before Singapore provided no crew change has been carried out in the last 14 days before the vessel's last port of call. The test results shall be submitted to MPA as soon as they are available and before the vessel arrives in Singapore. However, if crew change has been carried out in the last 14 days before the vessel's last port of call, all crew on board<sup>6</sup> (i.e. not only the sign-off crew that require PDT in Singapore) shall produce a negative test result from a COVID-19 PCR test taken at the vessel's last port of call before Singapore. **The test results shall be submitted to MPA as soon as they are available and before the vessel arrives Singapore.**

19. The COVID-19 PCR test(s) should be taken not more than 48 hours prior the vessel's departure from its last port before heading to Singapore. The COVID-19 PCR test shall be carried out by a government-approved or ISO 15189-accredited testing facility.

### Sign-on Crew Vaccination Application

20. Under the SEAVAX programme, MPA is able to facilitate the vaccination of sign-on crew in Singapore. Ship owners/managers/agents may apply for the crew's vaccination at the following link <https://go.gov.sg/mpa-icc-seavax> at least 7 days prior to the vessel's arrival in Singapore.



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<sup>6</sup> Includes the sign-off crew as well as crew that will remain on board and sail off with the vessel.

## Crew Change Application

21. Ship owners/managers/agents must apply for crew change<sup>7</sup> in Singapore via the Crew Change System (<https://transact.mpa.gov.sg/Crews>). The user guide for the new Crew Change System can be downloaded at this [link](#).



22. Ship owners/managers/agents shall submit applications at least 10 days before the planned crew change. For foreign-flagged ships, crew change will be considered if the ship meets all prevailing requirements, and is in Singapore for cargo operations, bunkering and/or other marine services.

### General

23. For crew changes to take place safely, MPA continues to expect all owners, agents, ships and individuals to ensure that the COVID-19 preventive measures are followed strictly. Any breach will be taken seriously.

24. Any queries relating to this circular should be directed to [crew\\_change@mpa.gov.sg](mailto:crew_change@mpa.gov.sg).

25. This circular is effective from 27 October 2021.

CAPT KEVIN WONG  
PORT MASTER  
MARITIME AND PORT AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE

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<sup>7</sup> Includes Singaporean, Singapore Permanent Resident as well as Long Term Pass Holder.

## Tele-medicine requirements

1 MPA accepts fit-to-travel certificates issued by Singapore Medical Council (SMC)-fully registered doctors meeting all following requirements:

- The doctor conducting the assessment must have completed the tele-medicine e-training provided by Singapore Ministry of Health (MOH). A copy of the doctor's e-training participation statement must be submitted with the fit-to-travel certificate to MPA;
- The doctor must conduct the clinical assessment over real time video (i.e. no asynchronous video, voice calls or text will be permitted);
- The assessment of the crew should be based on the prevailing suspect case definition set out by the MOH (e.g. MOH Circular 119/2020), which includes:
  - History taking;
  - Self-reported symptoms;
  - Visual assessment of symptoms; and
  - Real-time taking of temperature and SpO<sub>2</sub> (Doctors should provide guidance on the proper use of such devices during the assessment).
- The doctor should also include, in his assessment of the crew's general health, his consultations with the captain/senior officer and the signing-off crew lead, taking into consideration the prevailing suspect case definition.

2 If any of the above requirements cannot be met for any reason (e.g. no proof of statement of participation, concerns that self-reporting is not accurate, crew meet the prevailing suspect case definition, technology issues such as poor video call quality, or no on-board thermometer/SpO<sub>2</sub> device), a shipboard assessment of the crew by the doctor must then be done.

3 The doctor shall continue to take responsibility for the accurate completion of the fit-to-travel certificate regardless of the modality of assessment.

### Technical advisory for enhancing the conduct of tele-medicine onboard ships

4 As the tele-medicine consultations require real time video and audio, it is recommended that users utilise end-point devices (laptops, smartphones, or tablets) equipped with the following:

- Devices with front-facing cameras or webcams;
- Headphones/earphones with in-built microphones; and
- Local 4G/LTE cellular connectivity, as on-board WiFi may not have sufficient bandwidth to support real time video and audio.

5 In terms of device settings, the device system clock's time zone should be set to Singapore Standard Time (GMT +8).

6 For the **conduct** of the tele-medicine consultations, the recommendations to enhance the user experience are as follows:

- Cell phone reception can be affected by the metallic structure of the vessel. Therefore, for consultations using cellular service, it should be conducted at the ship's bridge where the cellular connectivity is usually strongest.
- Choose a location with sufficient lighting for the video session.
- There should be minimal crowding so as to respect personal privacy and maintain social distancing.
- Ambient noise should be kept to a minimum, e.g. turn down/off nearby air-conditioning units, reduce the volume of nearby walkie-talkies.
- Speak slowly and clearly, and refrain from speaking at the same time as the doctor.

**Designated holding facilities for sign-on crew**

Copthorne King's Hotel Singapore

Rooms: Air-conditioned with *en suite* bathroom

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner included. Meals will be delivered to the room.

For reservations, please contact:

+65 6318 3130

[reservations.ckc@millenniumhotels.com](mailto:reservations.ckc@millenniumhotels.com)

**Designated holding facilities for sign-off crew**

Seacare Hotel

Rooms: Air-conditioned with *en suite* bathroom

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner included. Meals will be delivered to the room.

For reservations, please contact:

Phang Jing Huei

+65 6818 2680

[reservations@theseacarehotel.com.sg](mailto:reservations@theseacarehotel.com.sg)

Hotel Re!

Rooms: Air-conditioned with *en suite* bathroom

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner included. Meals will be delivered to the room.

For reservations, please contact:

+65 6827 8288

[reservations@hotelre.com.sg](mailto:reservations@hotelre.com.sg)

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