



South African Maritime Safety Authority

Ref. SM 6/5/2/1
SM 14/2/7/1
SM 9/2/2

Date: 30 March 2020

Marine Notice No. 19 of 2020

COVID-19 – Process for extension of Certificates

TO SHIP OWNERS AND OPERATORS, SEAFARERS, MARITIME TRAINING INSTITUTIONS, EXAMINERS AND PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

To be read in conjunction with Marine Notice 18 of 2020, Marine Notice 16 of 2020, Marine Notice 15 of 2020, Marine Notice 14 of 2020, and Marine Notice 25 of 2014.

Summary

This Marine Notice seeks to advise Seafarers, employers and crewing agencies of the process to obtain documents to extend the validity of certificates issued in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Safe Manning, Training and Certification) Regulations 2013, as amended

Background and Introduction

1. The World Health Organisation recently declared the outbreak of COVID-19 Coronavirus as a pandemic.
2. On 15 March 2020, the Republic of South Africa declared the state of disaster following the outbreak of the COVID-19 Coronavirus. Further to this, the President of the Republic has declared a lockdown which include the shutdown of education institutions.
3. On 17 March 2020, through circular letter no. 4202/add.5, the International Maritime Organisation encouraged all parties to the STCW Convention to "...take a pragmatic and practical approach with regard to the extension of the above-mentioned certificates and endorsements..."
4. On 23 March 2020, the President of the Republic declared a lockdown, effective on Thursday, 26 March 2020, 23:59, to stop the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Depending on each particular situation, it may well be necessary for some seafarers to be onboard beyond the validity on their certificates.
5. The provisions of this Marine Notice apply to all certificated seafarers holding certificates issued by SAMSAR and those issued by institutions accredited by SAMSAR.

Validity and Revalidation of Certificates

6. Certificates of Competency (COC) and/or Certificates of Proficiency (COP) issued in accordance with the International Convention of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW Convention or the Convention) are generally valid for a period of five (5) years from the date of issue.

7. SAMSA has considered the predicament many seafarers and their employers are finding themselves in and have granted an extension until 30 September 2020 to any certificate that may expire during the national lockdown and/or shortly thereafter.
8. Applications for such extension shall be made electronically, with documents that have exceeded their validity date, may be acceptable provided that the certificate was valid on/before 15 December 2019,
9. Employers who find themselves with seafarers onboard their ships whose certificates are due to expire whilst on an extended tour of duty, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, shall apply as per paragraph 12 below.
10. South African registered ships who have seafarers holding certificates that will be expiring soon and are being affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic shall follow the process in paragraph 12 below
11. South African registered ships who has seafarers holding foreign COC's shall take the direction regarding seafarers Certification from that Administration and communicate to the Principal Officer where the ship is registered regarding any challenges they may encounter regarding validity of the seafarer's certificates.

Application for Extension of the Certificate

12. Seafarers and Employers who seek documentary proof of the extension of seafarer certification shall:
 - 12.1. apply through electronic means by following the instructions found here – <http://www.samsa.org.za/Pages/Application-for-the-extension-of-Certificate.aspx>
 - 12.2. In the event difficulty is experienced with the above procedure, please contact your nearest SAMSA office via e-mail as found here on SAMSA's website - <http://www.samsa.org.za/Pages/Contact-Us.aspx> . Please include both a copy of the CoC/CoP and the form in 12.1 above
13. Seafarers working onboard ships operating in South African ports do not need to have individual extensions but must keep a copy of this Marine Notice to show that they are operating under this extension – provided they are permitted to operate under the Disaster Management Act, 2002, as amended.

Rendering of services during the National Lockdown

14. SAMSA has, in accordance with the pronouncements of the president, declared the following seafarers' services as non-essential and will not be provided during the lockdown¹
 - 14.1. Level 3 Assessments (Orals) for all certificates
 - 14.2. Issue & Revalidation of all seafarers' certificates
 - 14.3. Application and issue for a Seafarer Record Book
15. The following services may be rendered, to the best possible extent, from SAMSA employees without the need for them to be physically present in the office:

¹ 'lockdown' means the restriction of movement of persons during the period for which this regulation is in force and effect namely from 23H59 on Thursday, 26 March 2020, until 23H59 on Thursday 16 April 2020, and during which time the movement of persons is restricted;

15.1. Application and issue of endorsement of foreign certificates (only Confirmation of Receipt of Application will be issued during the lockdown) including any related assessments thereof

15.2. Issue of extension of seafarers' certificates as stated 12 above

16. Seafarer certificates issued during this time will be in electronic format. Masters, owners and administration (flag states & PSCO's) shall accept these certificates at face value, provided that the verification of certificate, if necessary, is positive.

Certificates issued by SAMSA Accredited Training Institutions

17. The provision of this paragraph applies to all course completion certificates issued in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Safe Manning, Training and Certification) Regulations, 2013, as amended, by institutions accredited by SAMSA.

18. Where the seafarer had not applied to be issued with a certificate of proficiency (or competency) after completing any accredited training and as such needs an extension, he or she may apply for an extension of certificates until 30 September 2020 as per paragraph 7 and 8 above and the institution shall grant them such extension.

19. Each institution shall, before granting any such extension ensure that:

19.1. They only issue an extension for certificates which they have issued

19.2. Keep records of any such extension granted,

19.3. Where no process exists, the process for re-issue of copies certificates are following with variation of new date

Validity of Medical Certificates

20. All medical certificates issued by SAMSA approved medical practitioners are extended until 30 September 2020.

Validity of the Marine Notice

21. Provisions of this Marine Notice shall remain valid until withdrawn.

22. Enquiries regarding accredited institutions may be directed to the Chief Examiner via e-mail to exams@samsa.org.za.

30 March 2020

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Issued by and obtainable from:
**The South African Maritime Safety Authority
146 Lunnon Road
Hillcrest, Pretoria 0083**

**PO Box 13186
Hatfield 0028**

**Tel: +27 12 366 2600
Fax: +27 12 366 2601
E-mail: marinenotices@samsa.org.za
Web Site: www.samsa.org.za**