



South African Maritime Safety Authority

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

Date: 14 September 2020

Marine Notice No. 45 of 2020

COVID-19 – Process for extension of Certificates

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

Marine Notice No 29 of 2000 and 34 of 2020 is hereby cancelled

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. SAMS offices are open and all services are available at Level 2. Therefore, if a seafarer has all documentation in place, then application for revalidation should be made in the normal manner rather than seeking an extension.
6. The provisions of this Marine Notice apply to all certificated seafarers holding certificates issued by SAMS and those issued by institutions accredited by SAMS.

Validity and Revalidation of Certificates

7. 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.

8. SAMSA has considered the predicament many seafarers and their employers are finding themselves in and have granted an extension until 31 March 2021 to any certificate that may expire during the national lockdown and/or shortly thereafter.
9. Applications for extensions 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.
10. 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 13 below.
11. 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 indicated in paragraph 13 below.
12. 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. Those whose administrations have extended their certificates may be permitted to continue serving on such ships.

Application for Extension of Certificates

13. Seafarers and Employers who seek documentary proof of the extension of seafarer certification shall:
 - 13.1. apply through electronic means by following the instructions found here – <http://www.samsa.org.za/Pages/Application-for-the-extension-of-Certificate.aspx>
 - 13.2. 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 13.1 above
14. 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

15. All seafarers' related services are being provided in accordance with Marine Notice 41 of 2020, or the latest Marine Notice to replace it.
16. 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:
 - 16.1. 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
 - 16.2. Issue of extension of seafarers' certificates as stated 13 above

17. 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.

Extension of Accreditations and Approvals

18. Accreditation certificates issued to Training Institutions by SAMSA expiring during the Lockdown period or the period immediately thereafter, are extended as follows:
 - 18.1. All accreditations are extended until 30 September 2020
 - 18.2. The extension applies to all accreditations that are/were due to expire on or after 01 February 2020.
19. Approval certificates issued to Medical Practitioners by SAMSA expiring during the Lockdown period or the period immediately thereafter, are extended as follows:
 - 19.1. All approvals are extended until 30 September 2020
 - 19.2. The extension applies to all approvals which expired on or after 01 February 2020

Certificates issued by SAMSA Accredited Training Institutions

20. 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.
21. Seafarers who have not applied for a Certificate of Proficiency (or Competency) after completing SAMSA Accredited Training - and as such need an extension of an expiring course completion certificate - may apply for an extension to the issuing Institution. In such cases Accredited Institutions are required to issue an extension, by letter referencing the certificate number, or by amendment or re-issue of the course completion certificate. Extensions shall be valid until 31 March 2021 as per paragraph 7 and 8 above.
22. Each institution shall, before granting any such extension ensure that:
 - 22.1. They only issue an extension for certificates which they have issued.
 - 22.2. Keep records of any such extension granted.
 - 22.3. Where no process exists, the institution shall create a means to extend certificates.

Validity of Medical and Eyesight Certificates

23. All medical certificates issued by SAMSA approved medical practitioners are extended until 30 September 2020.
24. All SAMSA issued Eyesight Certificates (including those for Pilot Exemptions) are extended until 31 December 2020.
25. The above applies to all certificates which expired on or after the 1st February 2020.

Training Institutions - Operation at various Risk Levels

26. In the determination of the timing and extent of the resumption of operations, Training Institutions shall be guided by the latest Regulations from COGTA, the Department of Health, the DHET and the Department of Labour – and operate under those conditions. Reference www.sacoronavirus.co.za for the latest directives.
27. Institutions should be mindful of compliance with the requirements of the above government departments from the perspective that they are both businesses and educational institutions.
28. Each institution has the obligation to ensure that they meet all government requirements for operating under different Risk Levels. Institutions may therefore be subject to inspection by officials executing their duties under the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs regulations and the Department of Employment and Labour.
29. Records of compliance to government requirements for the COVID-19 pandemic shall be kept, maintained, and be available for inspection by SAMSA if required.
30. All institutions accredited for medical training and any course that deals with medical emergencies shall take note of the following guidelines from the [Resuscitation Council of Southern Africa](#) for:
 - 30.1. CPR for Everyone COVID-19 Algorithm
 - 30.2. BLS Algorithm for COVID-19
 - 30.3. Suggested Training of ALS Courses
31. Institutions providing training for Medical Care (STCW Code Section A-VI/4-2), where it is not practical to complete a Casualty Shift in a hospital setting during the pandemic, may complete the theoretical component of the training and complete the casualty shift within 1 year from completing the course. Where the course is completed without the casualty shift, the following applies
 - 31.1. The course completion certificate shall be valid for not more than 1 year from date of issue
 - 31.2. Upon completing the casualty shift, a new certificate shall be issued valid for a period of five years from the date of completing the shift.

Resumption of Seafarer Related Service

32. This part must be read together with Marine Notice No. 41 of 2020 or its succeeding Marine Notices.
33. SAMSA conducted a risk assessment to identify the COVID-19 risk level which it considers safe to providing seafarer services, below is the summary outcome and indications as to when these assessments may begin:

JOB DESCRIPTION	5	4	3	2	1
Level 3 Assessments	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Revalidation or Re-issue of Certificates	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Eyesight Examination	Provided for separately in a Marine Notice				

JOB DESCRIPTION	5	4	3	2	1
Accreditation & re-accreditation of training institutions	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Approval & Re-approval of Medical Practitioners	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extension of Certificates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Application & Issue for Seafarer Record Books ³	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1: Seafarers Services and Related activities

Validity of the Marine Notice

34. The provisions of this Marine Notice shall remain valid until withdrawn.
35. Enquiries regarding this Marine Notice may be directed to the Chief Examiner via e-mail to exams@samsa.org.za

14 September 2020

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