



**Virgin Islands Shipping Registry**

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16 March 2020

## **VIRGIN ISLANDS SHIPPING REGISTRY MARINE INFORMATION NOTICE 004**

### **CORONAVIRUS (Covid-19) Contingency Plan Guidelines for the services provided to Seafarers, Managing Agents and Ship owners by the VISR**

#### **Introduction**

The Government of the Virgin Islands is closely monitoring the situation in relation to COVID-19. At this time no restrictions in public service is announced. In case any such restrictions is announced by the Government then the Virgin Islands Shipping Registry (VISR) wishes to provide guidance on level of service that we are able to offer. The Ministry of Health and Social Development is leading the BVI government response to this outbreak. The ongoing situation will continue to be monitored and the advice will be updated as required.

#### **1. Seafarer's Certification and Minimum Safe Manning**

##### **1.1 Seafarer's Certification**

If the following documents are expiring or have expired and are unable to be renewed as a result of issues relating to COVID-19, the following course of action should be taken:

a) **STCW Certificate of Competency (CoC)** Seafarers are advised to contact their CoC issuing Authority requesting an extension to their existing CoC.

b) **BVI Boat Masters Licence** – The VISR will continue to examine qualified candidates for Boat Masters Licence both orals and practical until any restrictions are imposed on public services by the Government. If restrictions are imposed then only expiring or expired certificates will be renewed and the candidate is requested to follow procedures in c) below.

c) **BVI (Flag State) Endorsement** - The VISR will issue a Flag State Endorsement to CoCs that have been extended by their CoC issuing Authority with the new expiry date as stated on the CoC. The application for the Endorsement should be submitted online through

[https://bvi.seafarerhq.com/sign\\_in](https://bvi.seafarerhq.com/sign_in)

The procedure is stated in BVI Marine Notice 01-2018.

c) **Medical certificate** - If a medical certificate expires whilst the seafarer is at sea, the certificate is allowed to remain in force until the next port of call where the seafarer can obtain a medical certificate from a qualified medical practitioner. This concession is valid for a maximum of 3 months from expiry of the certificate. If a seafarer is urgently required to join a ship with an expired medical certificate, the VISR must be contacted for advice.

### **1.2 Minimum Safe Manning Document (MSMD)**

If a seafarer is unable to join a ship or has to leave a ship because of COVID-19 and this affects the ship's MSMD, the VISR must be contacted with a risk assessment to request permission to sail with fewer seafarers than stated in the MSMD. The VISR will assess the vessel's manning levels and temporary dispensation may be given for the ship to sail with reduced manning level.

## **2. MLC Implications**

### **2.1 Financial Security**

Under the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, seafarers are required to have coverage for medical care (Standard 4.1), repatriation (Standard A2.5.2) and contractual claims for sickness and injury (Standard A.4.2.1).

Ship owners and Managing agents are urged to confirm with their providers that their insurance or financial security covers seafarers for COVID-19 related issues and extend their coverage if necessary.

### **2.2 Seafarers Employment Agreements (SEA) Extensions**

The VISR is aware that travel restrictions related to COVID-19 are disrupting scheduled crew changes. In some cases, this has meant extending the SEAs of the current crew. Provided the following criteria are met, this course of action is acceptable and there is no requirement to contact the VISR:

- The extension of the SEA is mutually agreed by the seafarer and ship owner;
- It is documented by way of a new SEA or addendum to the current SEA, signed by both parties; and
- The service period does not exceed 12 months (or any alternative limit prescribed by an applicable CBA) If this service period will exceed 12 months (or any alternative limit prescribed by an applicable CBA), then the VISR should be contacted.

### **2.3 Quarantine/Self-isolation**

All seafarers should follow the guidance from the relevant health authorities concerning quarantine and self-isolation. If this occurs whilst the seafarer is in the service of the ship, it shall count as part of their service period.

### **3. Survey & Certification**

The following section applies to disruption caused to statutory surveys or audits as a result of COVID-19. This may be because a VISR or RO's surveyor is unable to attend a vessel due to travel restrictions or issues with the availability of dry-dock facilities.

#### **3.1 Delay in RO Statutory Surveys/Audits**

In the event that an RO is unable to undertake a statutory survey or audit, the RO concerned shall submit to the VISR an application for the extension of surveys, inspections or audits and/or the validity of statutory certificates accompanied by a recommendation of the course of action to be followed. All reasonable requests will be looked on favourably and the issuance of short term certification will be authorised on a case-by-case basis.

#### **3.2 Delays in Dry Docking**

The VISR will also look favourably on requests for the extension of a vessel's dry docking, or servicing of critical equipment as required under the respective IMO Conventions. In all cases such applications should be supported by the vessel's RO and shall include the reasons and evidence why the vessel is unable to comply. It is strongly advised that owners and managers submit such applications to the RO before the due date of the surveys/audits or expiry date of the statutory certificate in order to avoid port State control issues.

#### **3.3 BVI General Inspections (GIs)**

Where a GI is due and a BVI surveyor is unable to attend, the VISR will issue an exemption on a case-by-case basis with a suitable time scale.

#### **3.4 BVI Coastal Craft and SCV Inspections**

For all inspections that are needed to be performed within the territory of the BVI, the VISR will continue to offer the same standard of service until a call is taken by the Government for restrictions on public service. Due to travel restrictions imposed by different governments, the VISR will not be undertaking any inspections overseas.

In case the Government restricts public service then to ensure smooth running of businesses the VISR will adhere to the following procedures:

To book an inspection, contact the VISR by email on [vishipping@gov.vg](mailto:vishipping@gov.vg) and [bvishipregister@gmail.com](mailto:bvishipregister@gmail.com). The applicant should send a completed checklist (electronic copy available on request) and a signed declaration that all life-saving appliances, fire-fighting equipment and the general condition of the vessel are in acceptable condition. The inspector may call upon the applicant to provide photographic or video-graphic evidence to support the declaration. Upon satisfactory remote assessment of the vessel, a conditional certificate valid for sixty days will be issued to the vessel. See Section 3.8 for guidance on payment of fees.

### **3.5 BVI Statutory surveys on Large Commercial Yachts**

This applies in cases where the VISR undertakes statutory surveys on large yachts i.e. for ISPS, ISM, MLC and REG Yacht Code Compliance surveys. The Company or yacht should continue to contact the VISR in good time to request an attendance within the survey/audit window. If we are unable to attend we will look favourably at issuing short term certification on a case-by-case basis with a suitable time scale.

### **3.6 Internal ISM Audits**

Companies should be aware that regulation 12.1 of the ISM Code allows up to 15 months between audits in exceptional circumstances. If a Company is unable to undertake internal ISM audits within this range date, the Company is to contact the VISR with reasons why the internal audit cannot be completed. On a case-by-case basis, we will look favourably on issuing an agreement to extend the period beyond 15 months.

### **3.7 VISR Pre-registration surveys**

The Company shall endeavour to advise the VISR as soon as the date and location for the pre-registration survey is known. Possibility of attendance will be assessed by considering various factors. Result of this consideration will be duly communicated to the Company as soon as practicable. Alternative mutually convenient time and place for the survey can be arrived at on a case-by-case basis.

### **3.8 Payment of fees**

During the period of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, payment of fees for services rendered by VISR will be by credit card.

Additional Guidance Information on COVID-19 relevant to the maritime industry can be found on the following websites:

[International Maritime Organisation](#)

[International Maritime Health Association](#)

[World Health Organisation](#)

[International Chamber of Shipping](#)

Further information can be obtained from the Virgin islands Shipping Registry.