

Drugs and Alcohol

The purpose of this Marine Notice is to remind seafarers of their responsibility with regard to the consumption of alcohol and the potential effects on performance when prescribed medication and/or 'over the counter' drugs are taken.

Seafarers, whilst on board a ship, should remain capable at all times of performing any duty which may properly be required of them. This is particularly important on a ship, where an emergency may arise at any time requiring action by the crew.

Seafarers found to be under the influence of alcohol or any other drug (whether medicinal or otherwise) that impairs them to such an extent that their capacity to carry out their duties as master or seaman may be guilty of an offence under the *Navigation Act 1912*.

Alcohol

The *Navigation Act 1912* specifies the limit of blood alcohol content as:

- (a) in the case of a master or seaman while on duty – 0.04 grams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood; or
- (b) in the case of a master or seaman, on board the ship but not on duty – 0.08 grams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood.

Seafarers should also note that the offshore industry has developed alcohol policies with a zero blood alcohol level requirement which means not exceeding a blood alcohol concentration of 0.02 grams per 100 millilitres at all times. Should it be a condition of employment that a seafarer abides by the policy and the policy is breached the company may take disciplinary action in its own right.

Drugs

A person who has taken, or who proposes to take, a drug for medical purposes must not go on duty or remain on duty after taking that drug unless:

- (a) the person has taken reasonable steps to satisfy himself or herself that the drug will not affect, or has ceased to affect, the person's capacity to perform the duties of his or her position; or
- (b) The person has given a declaration to an approved person setting out:
 - (i) the circumstances in which the drug was taken, or will be taken; and
 - (ii) the nature and quantity of the drug involved; and
 - (iii) the time or times at which the drug was taken or will be taken.

The master of a ship or offshore installation manager, as appropriate, should be advised accordingly.

If there is any doubt about the likely effects of prescribed medication a seafarer should seek medical advice before commencing duty.

Penalties

The possession or consumption of illegal drugs is a criminal offence under Australian law and could lead to prosecution by various law enforcement bodies.

A breach of the *Navigation Act 1912* requirements in relation to performing duties while impaired by the influence of alcohol or any other drug is also a criminal offence and penalties are significant.



Additionally, AMSA's Manager, Ship Operations & Qualifications may take action against the certificate of an Australian certified seafarer if they are unable to properly perform their duties as a result of being impaired by the influence of alcohol or any other drug.

The Manager may deal with the certificate by:

- (a) cancelling it; or
- (b) suspending it until specified conditions are met; or
- (c) imposing restrictions on its use until specified conditions are met.

Accordingly, seafarers should be mindful of all requirements related to drug or alcohol usage and of the penalties that may be imposed if they are found to be in breach of these requirements.

Graham Peachey
Chief Executive Officer
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Australian Maritime Safety Authority
GPO Box 2181
CANBERRA ACT 2601

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