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MEDICAL FITNESS

Purpose

This Fact Sheet provides a summary of AMSA's requirements for a valid Certificate of Medical Fitness for all seafarers (Master or Deck Officers, Engineer Officers, Ratings, Marine cooks and coastal pilots) as required by *Marine Order 9 (Health – medical fitness) 2010*.

What is a Certificate of Medical Fitness?

Prior to the issue in Australia of an initial Certificate of Competency, Certificate of Recognition and Certificate of Proficiency, and prior to Revalidation, all seafarers must hold a valid Certificate of Medical Fitness.

Marine Order 9 requires that a person may only perform the duties of a seafarer on a relevant vessel if the person is medically fit to perform the duties.

A Certificate of Medical Fitness is endorsed to indicate the duty or duties for which the applicant is medically fit and is generally valid from the date of issue for a period of two years, except for those persons who are less than 18 years of age or 55 years of age or more. In these cases the certificate is valid from the date of issue for a period of up to one year. A Certificate of Medical Fitness may be issued for less than the full period if the medical inspector considers it appropriate. See section 8.6 of Marine Order 9 for more details of validity periods.

A person holding a Certificate of Medical Fitness must show the certificate on demand to the owner or master of a vessel on which the person serves, or intends to serve, or to an inspector.

A seafarer or licensed pilot whose Certificate of Medical Fitness shows that an aid to vision or hearing was used for the purpose of being found medically fit must, at all times when on duty on a vessel, use the aids for hearing and vision and in the case of vision, keep a spare aid available.

How do I obtain a Certificate of Medical Fitness: within Australia?

For seafarers living, working or presently in Australia, the certificate holder must obtain a valid Certificate of Medical Fitness issued in accordance with Marine Order 9 (Health – medical fitness). Marine Order 9 and Guidelines for the medical examination of seafarers and coastal pilots provide instructions for a medical inspector assessing an individual's fitness to work at sea.

The coordination and administration of all AMSA medical examinations leading to the issue of a Certificate of Medical Fitness including the booking of an appointment, is administered by Sonic Health Plus (SHP), on behalf of AMSA.

All AMSA medical examinations must be booked through the central booking system administered by SHP. Seafarers are no longer able to make appointments directly with the Medical Inspector of Seamen (MIS).

Note: Medical examinations booked directly with an MIS, rather than via the central booking system's 1300 number, will be deemed invalid.

STEP 1: To book a medical examination, seafarers and licensed coastal pilots must call the toll free central booking telephone number **1300 763 822**. Upon calling you will be asked to provide your location, and nominate a day and time on which you would like the medical examination to be conducted. The appointment will then be arranged by SHP with an authorised MIS and you will be contacted about your medical examination arrangements.

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides summary information only. AMSA makes decisions about seafarer certificates under *Marine Order 70 (Seafarer certification) 2014*, *Marine Order 71 (Masters and deck officers) 2014, Marine Order 72 (Engineer officers) 2014 and Marine Order 73 (Ratings) 2014*. Please refer to these Marine Orders for full details of eligibility and other requirements for certificate applications.

The central booking service is available Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm (daylight saving time), or 8am to 7pm AEST. At times of high demand when operators are taking other calls you may find you are directed to Messagebank. If this occurs, please leave a message including your name and telephone number so that the operator may return your call and arrange your medical examination. The central booking service is closed on National public holidays.

The contact details for booking an AMSA medical examination are:

Toll free: 1300 763 822
Email: seafarermedicals@sonichealthplus.com.au

STEP 2: You must take suitable means of identification (as identified on Form AMSA232 Medical Examination Report form) with you to the examination. You must also provide your AMSA ID number (this is located on your STCW certificate, refer to Fact Sheet 58, Seafarer ID). If you wear glasses, corneal or contact lenses please take them with you to the examination. Chromagen lenses must not be used for the examination.

STEP 3: On completion of your medical examination, the medical inspector will give you the original of the Certificate of Medical Fitness (AMSA303). They will then report to AMSA on the outcome of the examination. The Medical Inspector will keep copies of the documents for a period of 30 years.

How do I obtain a Certificate of Medical Fitness: outside Australia?

Note: All initial Certificates of Medical Fitness must be obtained in Australia. The process below ONLY APPLIES when Certificates of Competency are being renewed/revalidated.

Where a certificate holder is living and/or working overseas and wishes to revalidate their Certificate of Competency, they must also revalidate their Certificate of Medical Fitness. To do so, they must comply with the requirements for medical fitness listed below:

1. Ensure the country in which your medical examination is to be completed is listed as a Flag State Administration having an agreement in place enabling AMSA to recognise their certificates. Please see Fact Sheet STCW 05 Applications for Recognition of Primary Certificates Issued By Foreign Countries;
2. Contact that country's Flag State Administration to obtain information regarding a suitable medical inspector in that country;
3. Obtain a copy of the Medical Examination Report form AMSA232 and the Certificate of Medical Fitness form AMSA303 from the Fact Sheet Forms;
4. Take both Forms to the suitable medical inspector and ask them to use the report form as a guide for the medical examination. Upon completion of the medical examination, the medical inspector undertaking the examination should complete and sign both forms and give both back to you. The medical inspector will charge you for the examination;
5. Send the original or certified copy of the two completed and signed forms to AMSA Canberra together with the Application Form for revalidation of the certificate (Form AMSA419).

More information

A person declared unfit for the proposed duties at sea may apply for a second examination. If, after a second examination, the person is again declared unfit for the proposed duties at sea, they may arrange to be examined by an independent panel, the membership of which must be approved by AMSA. A person seeking to be examined by an independent panel is responsible for meeting all costs incurred. Details about further examinations and cancellations can be found in Marine Order 9 (subsections 8.5 and 8.7).

The owner or master of a vessel or AMSA may, at any time, require a seafarer or a licensed coastal pilot who is the holder of a valid Certificate of Medical Fitness to apply for a new certificate where as a result of illness, injury or other cause it is believed the seafarer may no longer meet the standards specified in Marine Order 9.

Previous AMSA Certificates of Medical Fitness remain valid until the expiry date on the certificate.

The Certificate of Medical Fitness form AMSA 303 complies with the *International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers 1978*, as amended (STCW Manila Amendments) and the Maritime Labour Convention.

Note: Information on the medical fitness requirements for seafarers holding Australian domestic vessel seafarer certificates and serving on an Australian domestic commercial vessel is contained in National Standard for Commercial Vessels (NSCV) Part D – Crew Competencies.

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