

**Commonwealth of Dominica**



**Office of the Maritime Administrator**

**TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS AND OPERATORS OF MERCHANT VESSELS**

**SUBJECT: Guidance to Assist with Impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Ship Operations**

The purpose of this Marine Advisory is to provide guidance, in the form of Questions and Answers, to assist Shipowners, Operators, Masters and Recognized Organizations that may be experiencing difficulty in conducting operations, due to the COVID-19. These difficulties include restricted access to shipyards and ports for inspectors, auditors, surveyors and crews, which could result in delays in conducting statutory surveys, audits, inspections, crew changes, etc., to maintain validity of certificates and compliance with regulations.

Shipowners and Operators who are or may be experiencing difficulties should contact the Administration immediately for assistance when the Inspector, Auditor or Surveyor is unable to attend. The Designated Person Ashore or the Shipowner's/Operator's representative should contact the Administration by email ([inspection@dominica-registry.com](mailto:inspection@dominica-registry.com)) with details of the difficulty encountered together with applicable supporting documents. Such documentation should include:

1. A copy of the Port Authorities statement that the vessel is quarantined and/or that no one is authorized to attend the ship; or
2. A copy of a statement or letter from the Inspector, Auditor and/or Surveyor stating that they are unable to attend the ship in the port where the inspection, audit or survey was to take place due to travel restrictions and our port restrictions; or
3. A copy of the statement or letter from the shipyard stating that they are unable to accommodate the vessel on the date previously agreed.

**The Safety Management Certificate (SMC):**

**Page 1of 7**

**Question 1: Will the Administration extend the internal initial ISM audit beyond 3 months (see 14.4.3 of the ISM Code)?**

Answer: The Administration authorizes an extension for up to one month. The company should provide evidence the audit was planned to take place within three months, and they are not able to complete the audit due to the port restrictions created in response to the COVID-19. If needed, the Administration will extend, or authorizes the RO to extend the Interim SMC a full 6 months (1 year from the date of issuance of the Interim SMC).

**Question 2: Can the internal annual ISM Audit be extended beyond the 15 months allowed by IMO Resolution MSC 273 (85) as authorized in ISM-001?**

Answer: The internal annual ISM Audit cannot be extended beyond 15 months. However, the Administration authorizes additional time to complete the onboard internal audit provided the internal auditor (identified by the vessel operator) conducts a remote audit with the assistance of an officer currently serving on board. The Administration will accept the remote audit in lieu of the onboard audit for a specific period of time. For additional guidance regarding remote audits, contact the Administration at [inspection@dominica-registry.com](mailto:inspection@dominica-registry.com).

**Question 3: Will the Administration extend the external initial ISM audit beyond the 6 months provided on the Interim SMC?**

Answer: The requirement states the certificate is to be issued for a period of 6 months from the date of the interim audit, but 14.3 of the ISM Code authorizes an extension of the validity of an Interim SMC in special cases for a further period which should not exceed 6 months from the date of expiry of the initial interim certificate. If adequate justification with supporting documentation is provided, the Administration will extend the Interim SMC accordingly.

**Question 4: Can the external intermediate audit required by the ISM Code be extended by the Administration?**

Answer: The Administration cannot provide an extension of the intermediate audit as the ISM Code provides a one-year window to conduct the Intermediate ISM Audit. See Question 22.

**Question 5: Will the Administration extend the date for the external renewal audit required by the ISM Code?**

Answer: The requirement states the certificate is to be issued for a period of 5 years from the date of the initial audit. 13.14 of the ISM Code authorizes an extension of the validity of the SMC for a further period of three months if the vessel is not in a port where the audit

can take place. If adequate justification with supporting documentation is provided, the Administration authorizes an extended SMC, or authorizes the RO to extend SMC.

**Question 6: Will the Administration extend the date for the external renewal audit required by the ISM Code beyond the three months provided by 13.14 of the ISM Code?**

Answer: The Administration will permit the vessel to operate with the existing SMC or issue a SMC with limited validity, if adequate justification with supporting documentation is provided.

**The International Ship Security Certificate (ISSC):**

**Question 7: Will the Administration extend the internal initial ISPS audit beyond the requirements found in the ISPS Code?**

Answer: 19.4.4 of the ISPS code states the internal audit must be planned to take place within 6 months. Provided the Administration can be shown the internal audit was planned to take place within 6 months, and the internal audit will be conducted in time to provide adequate documentation for the initial external audit, the Administration authorizes an extension up to one month before the initial audit is scheduled to take place.

**Question 8: Can the internal annual ISPS Audit be extended beyond the 15 months allowed by IMO Resolution MSC 273 (85)?**

Answer: The internal audit cannot be extended further. See Question 22.

**Question 9: Can the Interim ISSC be extended?**

Answer: The Interim ISSC cannot be extended. However, if the Administration receives adequate justification with supporting documentation, the Administration will issue or authorize the RSO to issue a Subsequent, Consecutive, Interim ISSC, when the Shipowner/ Operator provides documentation showing compliance with the 19.4.2.4 to 19.4.2.6 of the ISPS Code. Contact [inspection@dominica-registry.com](mailto:inspection@dominica-registry.com) for additional guidance.

**Question 10: Can the external intermediate audit required by the ISPS Code be extended by the Administration?**

Answer: The Administration cannot provide an extension of the Intermediate audit as the ISPS Code provides a one-year window to conduct the Intermediate ISPS Audit. See Question 22.

**Question 11: Will the Administration extend the date for the external renewal audit required by the ISPS Code?**

Answer: The requirement states the certificate is to be issued for a period of 5 years from the date of the initial audit, but 19.3.5 of the ISPS Code authorizes an extension of the validity of the ISSC for a further period of three months if the vessel is not in a port where the audit can take place. If adequate justification with supporting documentation is provided, the Administration will extend, or authorize the RSO to extend the ISSC accordingly.

**Question 12: Will the Administration extend the date for the external renewal audit required by the ISPS Code beyond the three months provided by 19.3.5 of the ISPS Code?**

Answer: The Administration authorizes the vessel to operate with the existing ISSC, if adequate justification with supporting documentation is provided.

**The Maritime Labour Certificate (MLC):**

**Question 13: Can the Administration extend the external initial MLC 2006 inspection beyond the 6 months provided on the Interim MLC?**

Answer: The Administration is unable to extend the interim MLC Certificate date as MLC does not provide for an extension. See Question 22.

**Question 14: Can the external intermediate inspection required by MLC 2006 be extended by the Administration?**

Answer: The Administration is unable to extend the intermediate MLC inspection date as MLC does not provide for an extension. See Question 22.

**Question 15: Can the Administration extend the date for the renewal inspection required by MLC 2006?**

Answer: The Administration is unable to extend the date of the renewal inspection required by MLC 2006. The requirement states the certificate is to be issued for a period of 5 years from the date of the MLC inspection for issuance of a full-term Certificate. See Question 22.

**Other Statutory Surveys and Certificates:**

**Question 16: Will the Administration authorize the postponement of a vessels dry dock survey and Statutory Surveys including the IOPP renewal survey?**

Answer: SOLAS Chapter I, Regulation 14(e) and MARPOL Annex I, Regulation 10.5 permits a Certificate to be extended by a maximum period of three (3) months if the ship is not in a port where the surveys are to be carried out. If it can be shown that a vessel was scheduled for the dry-docking survey in a shipyard and due to the outbreak of the COVID-19, the shipyard is experiencing major delays on all projects, the Administration may extend the Dry-Dock Survey and related Statutory surveys including the IOPP renewal survey beyond the maximum three (3) months, if the vessel operator provides the Administration with the necessary documentation. Contact [inspection@dominica-registry.com](mailto:inspection@dominica-registry.com) and the Recognized Organization for specific requirements.

### **Flag State Inspections:**

**Question 17: Will the Administration extend the flag State inspection for our vessel as it is currently calling on ports where the inspector or auditor cannot attend due to restrictions placed on vessels by port authorities due to the COVID-19?**

Answer: If the flag inspector is unable to attend due to current restrictions imposed on the vessel due to the COVID-19, the Administration will extend the flag State inspection to the next port where the inspection can take place. The vessel operator is to contact the inspection department at [inspection@dominica-registry.com](mailto:inspection@dominica-registry.com) if the vessel is due for flag State inspection, and provide documentation in support of the request to postpone, with the ship's schedule, so the inspection can be conducted when and where possible.

**Question 18: Will the Administration authorize the Permanent Certificate of Registry to be issued if the flag State inspection cannot be conducted before the expiration of the Provisional Certificate of Registry?**

Answer: The Administration will not authorize the issuance of a Permanent Certificate of Registry, but if the inspection is scheduled as the next available port, the Administration will authorize an extension of the Provisional Certificate of Registry until the date of the scheduled inspection.

### **Seafarers:**

**Question 19: Will the Administration permit agreements by seafarers to continue being engaged under their seafarers' employment agreements beyond a period of 11 months due to restrictions placed on vessels by port authorities due to the COVID-19**

Answer: The Administration will authorize seafarers to continue being engaged under their seafarers' employment agreement beyond 11 months. This allows a seafarer to postpone his/her annual leave and continue to be engaged beyond the 11 months, provided:

1. Both the seafarer and shipowner agree for seafarer to forego annual leave, if the period of engagement on board will exceed 11 months;
2. A proper risk assessment is carried out by the shipowner taking into account the ship's trading pattern, rest hours, and fatigue and other identified hazards.

The Administration authorizes seafarers to be engaged under their seafarers' employment agreements beyond a period of 11 months, taking into account arrangements made by the shipowner to repatriate seafarers as soon as possible at the next available port.

**Question 20: Will the Administration authorize a seafarer to continue service on board a ship when their Certificate of Competency (COC) issued by their national Administration has expired, and they are not permitted by the Port Authorities to depart due to the COVID-19?**

Answer: This Administration primarily issues endorsements of National COCs. In the scenario above, the Country issuing the seafarer's national COC should be contacted and asked to issue an extension of the national COC, so Dominica can issue an endorsement of the extension. If this cannot be accomplished, the Administration may, on a case by case basis, issue a short-term dispensation letter allowing the seafarer to continue to sail in their present capacity until the vessel reaches the first port where he/she can be replaced and repatriated. Documentation should be provided regarding the requirements of the Port Authorities and correspondence from the national Authority that issued the Seafarer's National COC denying the extension. Contact [mariner@dominica-registry.com](mailto:mariner@dominica-registry.com) if the dispensation is needed.

**Question 21: Will the Administration allow a vessel to sail without a Master, should the Master refuse to sail the vessel to a specific port or ports due to the COVID-19, and the ship manager cannot find a relief Master?**

Answer: If the vessel is in a safe port, the Administration cannot allow a vessel to sail without a Master. See Article VII of the STCW convention.

**Question 22: What if an extension of an audit or inspection cannot be granted?**

Answer: The Administration authorizes the vessel to sail to the next available port where the audit, or inspection can take place. This authorization automatically applies when port restrictions issued in response to the COVID-19 create unexpected extenuating circumstances beyond the vessel operator's control. The Shipowner/Operator will need to provide adequate justification with supporting documentation.

**Question 23: Has IMO provided guidance with regard to the COVID-19?**

Answer: Yes, IMO has issued following circular letters:

**Page 6 of 7**

[Circular Letter No.4204/Add.2](#)

[Circular Letter No.4204/Add.1](#)

[Circular Letter No.4203.Add.1](#)

[Circular Letter No.4204](#)

For latest IMO updates please follow this link:

<http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Any questions can be directed to:

**Department of Inspections**

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