

Seafarer medicals

Guidance for employers

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A large number of seafarers will need certificates of medical fitness from March 2018. Employers are responsible for checking crew have certificates of medical fitness.

What is the change?

The need for medical certificates is new for seafarers who ring-fenced their ticket(s). Thousands of seafarers hold older domestic tickets that they chose to “ring-fence” instead of transitioning to a new seafarer certification framework (SeaCert) introduced in 2014. They will need a certificate of medical fitness to keep working. This requirement starts two years from the date their Verification of Status (VoS) card was issued.

The requirements for employers

You can only employ seafarers on a ship if they have a category A, A (T), or B certificate of medical fitness. The seafarers you employ must work within any restrictions stated on the certificate of medical fitness. For example, the certificate may restrict the seafarer to within the Hauraki Gulf, or wearing hearing aids.

The master of the vessel on which a seafarer is employed can ask to see a crew member’s certificate of medical fitness at any time.

Medical exam

The medical examination of seafarers includes, but is not limited to testing the following issues:

- Are there any matters that may render the seafarer unfit for duty?
- Can the seafarer safely perform the duties covered by their maritime certificate?
- Is the seafarer sufficiently healthy to handle the challenging conditions experienced on-board ships – including in emergencies?
- Do they have any medical condition likely to be aggravated by service at sea?
- Is issuing the certificate consistent with maintaining the safety of vessels at sea while protecting the seafarer’s health?
- Is there any risk to the seafarer’s health and safety, other crew or passengers, and/or the safety of the ship?
- If yes (to (f) above), does proximity to shore lower the risk to health and safety and the safety of the ship?

What are the different medical categories?

Medical categories

A	Unrestricted sea service	C	Temporarily unfit for sea service
A (T)	Unrestricted sea service (temporary)	D	Indefinitely unfit for sea service
B	Restricted sea service only	E	Permanently unfit for sea service

Categories **C**, **D** and **E** certificates show the seafarer is not fit for work.

Second examination

If a seafarer is issued with a category B, C, D or E certificate they can request a second examination by emailing seafarers@maritimenz.govt.nz

When do certificates expire?

Certificates of medical fitness expire after a maximum of two years (for seafarers over 18). General Practitioners (GPs) or approved medical practitioners may choose to issue the certificate for a shorter period of time.

The requirements for your crew

Seafarers are responsible for:

- holding a current category A, A (T), or B certificate of medical fitness
- carrying the certificate of medical fitness when working on a ship
- working within any restrictions stated on the certificate of medical fitness
- advising Maritime NZ if they develop a medical condition that stops them from safely using their maritime certificate. It is an offence for seafarers to fail to tell the Director of any known information that is relevant to their fit and proper status.

Seafarers must be re-examined by an approved medical practitioner before starting work if they have been:

- unable to work for 30 days or more due to illness or injury
- discharged or evacuated from a ship for health reasons.

Disclaimer:

This guidance provides information and explanations about the requirements set out in the maritime rules, but are not a substitute for the rules themselves, which are the law. This guidance refers to provisions in Maritime Rules Part 34, Medical Standards. In this guidance, any references to 'we' or Maritime New Zealand (MNZ) are references to the Director or a person acting under the Director's delegated authority.

maritimenz.govt.nz/rules

What is an approved medical practitioner?

Approved medical practitioners are registered medical practitioners approved by the Director of Maritime NZ. Approved medical practitioners are authorised to conduct medical examinations for seafarers and issue certificates of medical fitness for seafarers. The list of approved medical practitioners is on the Maritime NZ website:

maritimenz.govt.nz/approvedGPs

Seafarers that have national or ring-fenced certificates

Who can seafarers get a certificate of medical fitness from?

Seafarers can get a certificate of medical fitness by visiting any registered New Zealand GP and asking for a medical examination for seafarers.

When do seafarers need a certificate of medical fitness?

Seafarers that have ring-fenced certificates need a certificate of medical fitness two years after their verification card was issued. For many seafarers this will be the first time they have needed a certificate of medical fitness.

Seafarers that have a National certificate need to keep their certificate of medical fitness current at all times.

Seafarers that have STCW or STCW-F certificates

Who can seafarers get a certificate of medical fitness from?

Seafarers that have an STCW or STCW-F certificate can only get a certificate of medical fitness by visiting an approved medical practitioner and asking for a medical examination for seafarers.

When do seafarers need a certificate of medical fitness?

Seafarers that have STCW or STCW-F certificates need to keep their certificate of medical fitness current at all times.

Further information

If you are interested in what will be covered in the medical examination see the relevant guideline on the Maritime NZ website: *Guideline for GPs Certificate of medical fitness – National and Ring-fence*, or *Medical standards information for STCW certificates*.

maritimenz.govt.nz/seafarers

If you can't find the information you need, send us an email:

seafarers@maritimenz.govt.nz