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CIRCULAR

Operation of the maritime sector after conclusion of the emergency situation

The emergency situation in the administrative territory of the Republic of Estonia due to the pandemic of the coronavirus COVID-19 ended on 17 May 2020; however, certain restrictions are still in force which continue to have an effect on the maritime sector. This is an overview of the situation as of 28 May 2020.

Repatriation of seafarers

1.1. Crossing the Estonian state border in case of crew changes

Certain restrictions continue to be imposed on most foreign nationals entering Estonia. Exceptions to this include asymptomatic crew members and persons performing repairs or warranty or maintenance work on ships, who are allowed to enter Estonia as transit passengers in accordance with Government Order No. 268 of 13.08.2002 "Procedure for Permitting Crew Members to Estonia", i.e. according to the ordinary procedure. The earlier restriction prohibiting accommodation of crew members as transit passengers in the territory of Estonia has been cancelled.

Crew change is possible in ports which are open for international traffic and have official border crossing points of the Police and Border Guard Board. Ports which are regularly visited by vessels operating in international trade are the following:

Sillamäe, Kunda, Muuga, Miiduranna, Vanasadam, Paljassaare, Lahesuu, Vene-Balti, Bekkeri, Meeruse, Paldiski North, Paldiski South, Heltermaa, Rohuküla, Kuivastu, Virtsu, Roomassaare, Saaremaa and Pärnu. The total list of ports which have official border crossing points is available on the website of the Police and Border Guard Board.

1.2. Repatriation of Estonian seafarers from foreign countries

Employers are obligated to repatriate crew members of ships flying foreign flags upon expiry of their contracts. If the employer fails to fulfil this obligation, seafarers should contact the representative of their flag state.

If repatriation is not permitted because of the restrictions imposed in the country of location and help from the state of Estonia is needed, contact the nearest Estonian embassy or call the emergency phone number +372 5301 9999 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also the Maritime Administration ought to be informed via the general e-mail eva@vta.ee.

1.3. Disembarkation of crew members at Estonian ports and calls by foreign vessels

When visiting Estonian ports, asymptomatic crew members have to take into consideration the requirements established with Government Order No. 268 of 13.08.2002 "Procedure for Permitting Crew Members to Estonia". The restrictions on disembarkation that were imposed earlier have been lifted; regular disembarkation of crew members while their ship stays at an Estonian port is acceptable when following the orders of the person in charge of the emergency situation, regarding restrictions, if there are any.

In case a ship calling at the port signals the presence of a seafarer with suspected infectious disease, the health declaration must be submitted via the electronic maritime information system (EMDE) to the Health Board's service operating 24/7.

2. Seafarers' certificates

2.1. Extension of seafarers' certificates and endorsements

The Seafarers' Certification Department of the Maritime Administration is open at the usual hours at the address Lume 9.

Maritime educational and training institutions now continue to provide training and refresher and updating courses in the regular manner. Crew members who are still on a voyage and cannot return to Estonia due to the restrictions established, and whose certificates have expired during their voyage, can still renew their certificates via e-learning. More detailed information is given in MA Circular No. 5 ver 2 of 26 May 2020.

2.2. Seafarers' health certificates

Health examinations of seafarers are performed in accordance with the regular procedure. A list of physicians authorised to carry out health assessments on crew members can be found on the Health Board website. We recommend contacting them before health examination appointments in order to check whether there are any restrictions on the provision of health care services arising from the pandemic.

Seafarers' health certificates issued by Estonian physicians with the validity period of two years, which expire during the voyage due to prolongation of the voyage caused by the Covid-19 virus, will be extended by three months in accordance with STCW Regulation I/9.

3. Ship supervision and inspections

3.1. Inspection of foreign-flagged ships in Estonian ports

Foreign-flagged ships are inspected after risks have been evaluated (ports of departure, crew changes, etc.).

3.2. Inspections of Estonian-flagged ships

Estonian-flagged ships are subject to routine inspections in Estonia and in foreign states whose borders are open and where no restrictions on travel are imposed. The Maritime Administration is currently using the possibilities provided by law to extend the inspection deadlines. More detailed information about extension of the statutory certificates for ships flying the Estonian flag has been published in Maritime Administration Circular No. 6 of 31 March 2020.

Recreational craft

3.3. Training of skippers

Since 15 May, examinations of skippers may be conducted again. As before, the Maritime Administration must be informed of the planned examination five working days in advance.

3.4. Surveys of recreational craft

Surveys of recreational craft are carried out, with reasonable precautions still being taken and the safety measures established for the protection of health considered.

3.5. Documents to be carried while navigating at sea with recreational craft

There are no extraordinary restrictions on or requirements for going to sea in recreational craft. The certificate of a skipper of a recreational craft does not have to be carried if the skipper carries an identity document. It is not mandatory to carry the registration certificate of the recreational craft registered in Estonia only if the skipper of a recreational craft carries an identity document and the skipper of the recreational craft is entered in the traffic register as the owner, authorised user or user, or if the owner, authorised user or user is present on board the recreational craft. If a person rents a recreational craft, he/she is obligated to carry the certificate of a skipper of a recreational craft, because in that case the registration certificate does not contain information about the person.

Foreign nationals arriving at Estonian ports will be advised that they are also subject to the existing restrictions on entering the Republic of Estonia.

4. Navigation in Estonian waters

4.1. Aids to Navigation and navigational information

Seamless operation of the aids to navigation in Estonian waters is ensured as usual and no restrictions have been imposed. Preparations for the summer season have been completed. Navigational information is being published via the ordinary channels.

4.2. Fairway dues

From 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, all ships arriving at an Estonian port or a roadstead of an Estonian port are exempted from paying fairway dues.

4.3. Pilotage

The pilotage service is being provided in the customary manner and no special measures have been established.

4.4. Vessel traffic management and reporting formalities

The VTS and GOFREP systems continue operation in the ordinary manner and the safety of vessel traffic is ensured.

The electronic maritime information system (EMDE) functions as usual; no additional reporting obligations have been added. As before, a completed health declaration form must be submitted through EMDE if there is a case of infectious disease on board.

5. Port supervision

All supervisory activities are performed in ports (no exceptions), taking health protection precautions.

6. Earlier circulars

I herewith revoke Circular No. 1-1-6/882 of 09.04. 2020 by Director General of the Maritime Administration regarding the impact of the emergency situation on the maritime sector.

(digitally signed)

Marek Rauk

Head of Maritime Safety Division- Deputy Director General
In the capacity of Director General