



Technical Circular

No.: 021/2020

Date: 24th March 2020

Subject: Liberia – Marine Advisory No. 07/2020 Reg. Guidance to Assist with Impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Ship Operations

1. The Liberia Maritime Administration vide attached Marine Advisory 07 of 2020 has provided guidance to assist Shipowners, Operators, Masters and Recognized Organizations that may be experiencing difficulty in conducting operations, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. 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.
3. Shipowners and Operators who are or may be experiencing difficulties are advised to contact the Liberian 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 Fleet Port State Control Performance Department by email (prevention@liscr.com) with details of the difficulty encountered together with applicable supporting documents.
4. Such documentation should include;
 - i. A copy of the Port Authorities statement that the vessel is quarantined and/or that no one is authorized to attend the ship; or
 - ii. 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
 - iii. A copy of the statement or letter from the shipyard stating that they are unable to accommodate the vessel on the date previously agreed.
5. Guidance in respect of following are detailed in the attached Marine Advisory.

A. The Safety Management Certificate (SMC):

- a. **Extension for the internal initial ISM audit beyond 3 months:** The Administration will authorize an extension for up to one month. The company is to provide evidence



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that 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 may extend, or authorize the RO to extend the Interim SMC a full 6 months (1 year from the date of issuance of the Interim SMC).

- b. Extension of internal annual ISM Audit beyond the 15 months:** The internal annual ISM Audit cannot be extended beyond 15 months. However, the Administration can authorize additional time to complete the onboard internal audit, issuing a letter granting the authorization, 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 Fleet Port State Control Performance Department at prevention@liscr.com.
- c. Extension of external initial ISM audit beyond the 6 months provided on the Interim SMC:** 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.
- d. Extension of external intermediate audit:** 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 Note*)
- e. Extension of external renewal audit:** 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 will issue an extended SMC, or authorize the RO to extend SMC.
- f. Extension of external renewal audit beyond the three months provided by 13.14 of the ISM Code:** 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.

B. The International Ship Security Certificate (ISSC):

- a. Extension of internal initial ISPS audit:** 19.4.4 of the ISPS code states that 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 will authorize an extension up to one month before the initial audit is scheduled to take place. If requested an official letter may be provided.

- b. **Extension of internal annual ISPS audit:** The internal annual ISPS audit cannot be extended. (*See Note*)
- c. **Extension of Interim ISSC:** 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 audit@lisr.com for additional guidance.
- d. **Extension of external intermediate ISPS audit:** 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 Note*)
- e. **Extension of external renewal ISPS audit:** 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.
- f. **Extension of 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:** The Administration will permit the vessel to operate with the existing ISSC or issue an ISSC with limited validity, if adequate justification with supporting documentation is provided.

C. The Maritime Labour Certificate (MLC):

- a. **Extension of external initial MLC inspection beyond the 6 months provided on the Interim MLC:** The Administration is unable to extend the interim MLC Certificate date as MLC does not provide for an extension. (*See Note*)
- b. **Extension of external intermediate MLC inspection:** The Administration is unable to extend the intermediate MLC inspection date as MLC does not provide for an extension. (*See Note*)
- c. **Extension of renewal inspection:** 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 Note*)

D. Other Statutory Surveys and Certificates:

- a. **The postponement of vessels dry dock survey and Statutory Surveys including the IOPP renewal survey:** 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 and installation of a BWMS 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 regsandstandards@liscr.com and the Recognized Organization for specific requirements.

E. Flag State Inspections:

- a. **Postponement of Flag State Inspection:** 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 audit department at audit@liscr.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.
- b. **Issuance of Permanent Certificate of Registry without flag State inspection:** The Administration will not authorize the issuance of a Permanent Certificate of Registry, but if the flag State inspection is scheduled at the next available port, the Administration will authorize an extension of the Provisional Certificate of Registry until the date of the scheduled inspection.

F. Seafarers:

- a. **Extension of seafarers' employment agreements beyond a period of 11 months:** The Administration will authorize seafarers to continue being engaged under their seafarers' employment agreement beyond 11 months. See paragraph 3.5.4 of Marine Notice MLC-003, issued by the Administration. This allows a seafarer to postpone his/her annual leave and continue to be engaged beyond the 11 months, provided:
 - i. Both the seafarer and shipowner agree for seafarer to forego annual leave, if the period of engagement on board will exceed 11 months;
 - ii. 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 will issue a letter to the shipowner agreeing to 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. Contact: mlc@lisr.com if this authorization is needed.

- b. **Extension of Seafarers Certificates of Endorsement:** The Administration primarily issues endorsements of National COCs. In case a seafarer's national certificate will expire, the Country issuing the seafarer's national COC should be contacted and asked to issue an extension of the national COC, so that Liberia 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 prevention@lisr.com if the dispensation is needed.
- c. **Allowing 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:** 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.

Note: In case an extension of an audit or inspection cannot be granted, the Administration may issue a letter authorizing the vessel to sail to the next available port where the audit, or inspection can take place. This authorization letter will be issued when requested if port restrictions issued in response to the COVID-19 create unexpected extenuating circumstances beyond the vessel operator's control. To receive the vessel specific authorization letter from the Administration, the Shipowner/Operator will need to provide adequate justification with supporting documentation.

6. Ship owners/ operators and masters of Liberia flagged ships are advised to be guided by above.

Enclosure:

Liberia Marine Advisory No. 07 of 2020, dated 24 February 2020.

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