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Circular Letter No.4231/Add.5
14 May 2020

To: All IMO Members
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **Communication from the Government of the Kingdom of Norway**

The Government of the Kingdom of Norway has sent the attached communication, dated 12 May 2020, with the request that it is circulated by the Organization.

International Maritime Organisation
4, Albert Embankment
SE1 7SR
London
United Kingdom

Information on principles for change of crew in Norwegian ports

In the light of the current international pandemic, the Norwegian Maritime Authority would like to express its sincere gratitude and support to the Secretary-General's initiative and recommendation to not impose disproportionate restrictions that would prevent the international shipping industry from maintaining the necessary flow of goods.

Annexed to this letter, the Norwegian Maritime Authority provides information on principles applied for crew changes to take place in a way that ensures the safety and security of the ship as well as the health and welfare of seafarers. The principles have been drawn up in cooperation with Norwegian employees' and employers' organisations.

We kindly request that this information be circulated to the IMO Member States.

Yours faithfully,

Lars S. Alvestad
Acting Director General of Shipping and Navigation

Annex: Guidelines regarding change of crew

This document has been electronically approved and signed.



Guidelines regarding change of crew

In consultation with several bodies, including employers' organisations and labour organisations, the NMA has established the following guidelines to facilitate crew changes.

This is a revised edition of the previous published guidelines. The amendments are mainly related to clearer routines regarding change of crew.

The Norwegian Maritime Authority (NMA) sees that shipping companies, seafarers and fishermen face challenges in organising crew changes due to national and municipal quarantine provisions. In consultation with several bodies, including employers' organisations and labour organisations, the NMA has established the following guidelines to facilitate crew changes.

The Regulations relating to infection control measures etc. in connection with the coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19 Regulations) entered into force on Friday 27 March 2020. These Regulations replace previous regulations.

The NMA makes reservations that new guidelines may be issued by the health authorities regarding quarantine and protection due to the coronavirus situation.

Crew and other personnel living in Norway who are travelling to and from the ship

The provisions of the Regulations relating to infection control measures etc. in connection with the coronavirus outbreak shall apply. According to section 8 of the Regulations, persons who have been in close contact (see section 3) with a person less than 48 hours before that person developed the first symptoms of infection, when that person has later been confirmed as having contracted the SARS CoV-2 virus, shall undergo quarantine for 10 days after contact.

“Close contact” in this context refers to contact in closer proximity than two metres from other persons for more than 15 minutes, or direct physical contact.

The quarantine period should preferably be completed before they commence service on board. If the quarantine period must be completed on board, close contact with other persons on board must be avoided and the company must conduct a special risk assessment.

The individual municipality may have laid down other requirements. The Norwegian Government has issued guidelines recommending that some of the local quarantine rules related to the outbreak of COVID-19 should be avoided, for example rules restricting transit without stay in the municipality or transport of persons or goods. If there are any challenges related to this, the relevant municipality should be contacted.

Persons who are essential to maintain the proper operation of critical public functions related to matters of life and health may be exempt from the duty of quarantine under section 9 of the Regulations.

Persons confirmed to have contracted the SARS CoV-2 virus before they commence service on board shall be isolated. Such isolation shall not take place on board a vessel.

Crew and other personnel arriving ships in Norway from abroad who are travelling to and from the ship

The provisions of sections 5 and 6 of the Regulations relating to infection control measures etc. in connection with the coronavirus outbreak shall apply. The individual municipality may have laid down other requirements. The Norwegian Government has issued guidelines recommending that some of the local quarantine rules or arrival restrictions related to the outbreak of COVID-19 should be avoided, for example rules restricting transit without stay in the municipality or transport of persons or goods. If there are any challenges related to this, the relevant municipality should be contacted.

Workers living in Norway, Sweden or Finland are exempted from duty of quarantine when travelling to and from their residence and the vessel (work).

Other workers who are needed to maintain the proper operation of critical public functions or attend to fundamental needs of the population are exempt from the duty of quarantine when they are working or travelling to and from work.

The NMA considers that crew members who are necessary for safe operation of the vessel in accordance with the minimum safe manning requirements are essential and therefore exempt from the requirement of quarantine upon arrival. A need for additional manning in order to maintain a safe operation will be assessed by each individual company. An exemption must be authorised by the individual company management. The same applies to vessels that do not hold a safe manning document, but the company must then assess which manning would be required for compliance with requirements for i.e. watchkeeping and rest hours.

The NMA recommends that each company prepare a declaration confirming that the assessment has been done, and that the individual worker performs services for the company.

Persons included under the exemption shall, to the degree possible, avoid close contact with other persons, cf. section 3.

An employee who has been in close contact with someone confirmed as having contracted the SARS CoV-2 virus must undergo quarantine.

Change of crew abroad

Reference is made to Norwegian quarantine rules and infection control measures. The NMA suggests that these practices, as a minimum, should be followed internationally as well. Additionally, national provisions laid down by the relevant coastal State and port State will apply. The company should contact the local authorities to establish which procedures and practices must be followed.

If it is not possible to conduct a crew change as planned and personnel on board have certificates and similar documents which are about to expire, reference is made to the following document: [Extending the validity of personal certificates, medical certificates and CRA](#)

Quarantining on board regarding crew changes

Quarantining on board is particularly relevant for international voyages where crew members are required to undergo quarantine by the country in which they sign on or travel through, and they have not been in close contact with persons who are ill and do not display symptoms of illness.

A person in quarantine is to stay in his or her own home or other suitable place of accommodation. The NMA concludes that the ship can be defined as other suitable place of accommodation, provided that close contact with other persons on board can be avoided.

Each company must consider if this is possible or not. The provisions on protection of the Regulations on the working environment, health and safety of persons working on board ship must be complied with when persons on board are undergoing quarantine. Moreover, we refer to guidelines and advice from Norwegian health authorities, etc. Please contact the NMA for further guidance.

The NAM points out the company's responsibility to perform continuous risk assessments of the situation and implement preventive measures on board and in connection with crew changes, and also to have an emergency preparedness plan in case of infection on board.

If crew members are quarantined on board, particular attention must be paid to employees in high-risk groups and to the planned operation of the vessel.

Quarantine when signing off

Local health authorities will be informed in accordance with the guidelines currently in force.

Crew members and other persons on board who have not been in contact with persons outside the ship, signing off in Norway after staying at least 10 days on board and who do not have any symptoms, can be assessed as not infected by the NMA and are not required to quarantine. The NMA considers that the same applies internationally, but rules laid down by the relevant coastal State and port State will apply.

The company shall in other cases, pending a return, make sure that local quarantine locations are established for crew not residing in Norway or the applicable country.

When transport has been confirmed and it is time for return, the company will use established routines to get the relevant crew out of Norway.

Documentary requirements for change of crew

The NMA has been asked what is considered sufficient evidence that seafarers and fishermen work on board Norwegian vessels. In addition to necessary documentation of seafarers' and fishermen's qualifications, training, medical issues, etc. it is sufficient that the following documentation is available at the time of crew change:

- A copy of the employment agreement. A copy must be available of the seafarers' employment agreement (SEA) and of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) which forms a part of the employment agreement. The same applies to a copy of contracts for other persons working on board.

- Persons who work on board shall hold an identification document. Norwegian citizens may use their Sea Service Book or their passport.
- For those who do not have a Sea Service Book, a valid passport and a copy of their employment agreement will be sufficient to document that they work on board a Norwegian vessel.
