



**The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Transport
Ethiopian Maritime Affairs Authority (EMAA)**



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MARINE GUIDANCE NOTICE NO. 4-2015

**TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF
MERCHANT SHIPS , AND RECONGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS**

**SUBJECT: Marine Guidance Notice on Medical Examinations and Certificates for
Seafarers.**

References: (a) Ethiopian Maritime Code, 1960

(b) Maritime Labour Convention, 2006

**(c) ILO/WHO Guidelines for Conducting Pre sea and Periodic Medical
fitness examination for Seafarers**

(e) Medical Examination (Seafarers) convention 1946 (ILO No. 73)

(d) STCW Convention, Section B-I/9

(e) Medical standard for seaman guideline No.3/2001 EMAA

PURPOSE:

This Marine guidance notice details suggested practices for conducting physical examinations of seafarers prior to beginning work on an Ethiopian flag ship and periodically thereafter to ensure that they are medically fit to perform the duties they are to carry out at sea. This marine guidance notice supplements requirements for merchant marine personnel certification contained in STCW Code, guideline of EMAA. Hence, Seafarers are encouraged to provide a copy of this notice to their medical examiner prior to and for use during medical examinations.



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BACKGROUND:

This marine guidance notice is based on the International Labour Organization/World Health Organization Document, Guidelines for Conducting Pre-Sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examinations for Seafarers (ILO/WHO/D.2/1997). Consideration of this marine guidance notice is required by Section B-1/9 of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Seafarers, 1978, (STCW), as amended, and by guideline B1.2.1 of the Maritime Labor Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006).

1. Qualification of Medical Examiners

1.1 A medical examiner undertaking seafarers medical examination should:

- Be a licensed physician with independence from employers, workers and their representatives in exercising medical judgment with respect to examination procedures;
- Be experienced in general and occupational medicine or maritime occupational medicine;
- Have knowledge of the living and working conditions on board ships, gained either through special instruction or through personal experience of seafaring; and
- Be familiar with the IMO/WHO publication, *International Medical guide for Ships*, upon which this marine guidance notice is based.

1.2 For the purpose of medical certification examinations, EMAA may not utilize, Medical Examiners found to be incompetent, unethical or guilty of professional misconduct as a result of an appeals or complaints procedure, or the medical examiner's license is suspended or revoked by the issuing Authority.

1.3 The EMAA recognizes medical examiners approved by competent authorities of States that are party to the MLC, 2006, Medical Examination of Seafarers.



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2. Guidance to Medical Examiners

2.1 While nothing in these notice should preclude sound medical judgment, in conducting an examination, a medical examiner should bear in mind the following aspects of shipboard life:

- It is unadvisable and often unsafe to allow persons with certain medical conditions to become seafarer or return to seagoing employment due to the difficulty of transporting sick or injured seafarers ashore where they can receive adequate medical care.
- Contagious diseases may be a threat to other crew members and, when carried, passengers, due to the close living conditions.

3. Pre-Sea and Periodic Medical Exams

3.1 The ILO/WHO guidelines differentiate between pre-sea and periodic medical examinations. Pre-sea examinations are those conducted before a person embarks upon a seafaring career. Periodic medical examinations are those conducted either before a seafarer reports to a ship or at periodic interval during the seafarer's career.

3.2 Under medical standard for Seamen Guideline no.3/2001, seafarers must undergo a medical examination prior to employment aboard a vessel (Not more than 12 months prior to the date of making application) and normally (unless a shorter time is specified for specific duties or required by STCW) every two (2) years thereafter (unless the seafarer is under the age of 18 where an annual exam is required) to obtain a valid medical certificate/report showing medical fitness for duty. The scope of the medical exam for both pre-sea and periodic assessments is identical.

3.3 In addition, prior top or during employment on an Ethiopian flag vessel, seafarers must undergo a medical exam, including mental health counseling, should they be subjected to a situation involving robbery, hostage taking or piracy aboard a vessel.



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- 3.4 In urgent cases, a newly hired seafarer may work without a valid medical certificate until the next port of call where the seafarer can obtain a medical certificate from a qualified medical practitioner, provided that the period of work without a valid certificate does not exceed three (3) months and the seafarer concerned is in possession of a medical certificate that has expired within the past six (6) months.
- 3.5 A model medical examination form is provided in Appendix 1. This form, although not mandatory, details the minimum requirements that a medical examiner should cover during an examination of a seafarer. Persons seeking to work on board an Ethiopian flag vessel are encouraged to provide this form to their medical examiner to ensure all required aspects of the medical examination are covered. This form should not be confused with the Physical Examination Report/Certificate (form Fo-MA-25, Appendix 1), which is a summary of the medical examination and is required to be filled out and signed by the medical examiner and then submitted to the Administrator to show fitness for duty.

4. Determination of Fitness for duty

In conducting a medical examination and evaluating a seafarer for fitness for duty, the medical examiner should consider the following items.

4.1 Requirements of Job

Medical issues may necessitate restrictions on an examinee's work (e.g., fit for coastal or harbor service only) or disqualify a seafarer from service. Therefore, the examinee's intended position on board ship and the physical and psychological requirements of this work should be considered as should the age and experience of the person, the nature of the duties to be performed and the type of shipping operations and cargo.



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4.2 Occupational History

Occupational history should be considered as it may illuminate potential occupational health hazards (e.g., risk of cancer from chemical cargoes, risk of hearing loss from work in engine room).

4.3 Previous Medical History

Information should be collected directly from the examinee on his/her previous medical history, including details of previous diseases, injuries and mental health issues. The examinee's previous medical records, where appropriate, should be reviewed.

4.4 Counseling

As appropriate, the medical examiner should counsel and provide printed health educational materials to the seafarer on:

1 Lifestyle, such as:

- Limiting alcohol intake (see ILO publication, Drug and alcohol prevention programmes in the maritime industry, a manual for planners);
- Stopping smoking;
- Modifying diet; and
- Losing weight.

2. The dangers and methods of prevention of communicable diseases,

such as:

- Malaria;
- Hepatitis; and
- HIV/AIDS

3. The dangers, symptoms and treatment for sleep disorders, such as:



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- Narcolepsy
 - Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)
4. Post trauma coping mechanisms, including short-and long term mental health treatment necessitated by shipboard incidents of:
- Robbery;
 - Hostage taking; or
 - Piracy.

4.5 Hearing

Hearing should be checked using a pure tone audiometer and recorded. Every seafarer on an Ethiopian flag vessel must have hearing unimpaired for normal sound and be capable of hearing a whispered voice in the better ear at 15 feet (4.57m) and in the poorer ear at five (5) feet (1.52m).

4.6 Eyesight and Color Vision

A licensed medial practitioner should examine a seafarer for visual fitness. Eyesight should be checked using appropriate equipment and recorded.

1. Eyes of seafarers should be free of disease. Any permanent or progressing rehabilitating pathology without recovery should be a cause for determination of unfitness.
2. Eyesight must be in compliance with the minimum requirements established by the Administrator in accordance with the MLC, 2006 and STCW as provided below.
 - Deck/Navigational Officer- A candidate must have (either with or without glasses) at least 20/20 (1.00)¹ vision in one eye and at least 20/40 (0.50) in the other. If the candidate wears glasses, he/she must have vision without glasses of at least 20/160 (0.13) in both eyes. The candidate also must have normal color perception, and be capable of distinguishing the colors red, green, blue and yellow.



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- Engineer or Radio Officer – A candidate must have (either with or without glasses) at least 20/30 (0.63) vision in one eye and at least 20/50 (0.40) in the other. If the candidate wears glasses, he must have vision without glasses of at least 20/200 (0.10) in both eyes. An engineer or radio officer candidate shall be examined only as to perception of the colors red, yellow and green.
3. The maximum period of validity for a color vision certificate shall be six (6) years.

4.7 Vaccinations

The examinee's vaccination record should be examined. Seafarers should be vaccinated according to the requirements indicated in the WHO publication, International travel and health: Vaccination requirements and health advice. The medical examiner should give advice to the seafarer on immunizations. If new vaccinations are given, they should be recorded. It is recommended that all vaccinations be recorded on the International Certificate of Vaccination or prophylaxis.

4.8 Communicable Diseases

1. The medical examiner should certify whether an applicant is free from communicable diseases.
2. Seafarers expected to be handling food (i.e, those in the stewards department) diagnosed with, suspected of, or exposed to any communicable disease that can be transmitted by food shall be restricted from working in any food or food-related areas or operations (including working with exposed food, equipment, utensils, table linens, single-service and single use articles or ware washing) until they are symptom-free for a minimum of 48 hours.
3. Communicable diseases that can be transmitted by food include, but are not limited to, typhoid (*Salmonella typhi* bacteria), Shigellosis(*Shigella* spp.bacteria), cholera (*Vibrio* spp.bacteria),

¹ Numbers contained in parentheses are equivalents measured utilizing the decimal visual acuity scale.



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intestinal disease (Escherichia coli O157:H7 bacteria) and liver disease (hepatitis A virus). Other communicable diseases, as provided in section 4.9, below, may render an applicant unfit for duty. In any case of communicable disease, the medical examiner should provide counseling to the applicant as provided in section 4.4, above.

4.9 Medical Conditions

There are medical conditions that if of a certain type or severity or if left untreated preclude service at sea permanently or temporarily or justify medical surveillance and/or restrictions on time, position, trade area and type of ships. These conditions are listed in Appendix 2.

1. When determining fitness for sea service of a person with any of these conditions, a medical examiner should evaluate:
 - The critical time needed for treatment/access to appropriate land-based care;
 - The extent of the threat and danger caused by the medical problem to the patient;
 - The current risk of occurrence of the medical problem; and
 - Whether the condition is under control by medication, diet or another means and, if so, whether the person is under a physician's care on a regular basis for the condition.
2. In any circumstance, a seafarer with the following medical conditions shall be considered unfit for duty:
 - Epilepsy;
 - Insanity;
 - Senility;
 - Alcoholism;
 - Tuberculosis;
 - Acute venereal disease or neurosyphilis;
 - AIDS; and/or
 - The use of narcotics.



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4.10 Determination of Fitness

4.10.1 If a person is found fit for the work to be performed, the medical examiner should fill out form FO-MA-25, and/or Physical Examination Report/Certificate (Appendix 1) or on the official form of a country which is party to the MLC, 2006 or ILO Convention No. 73 on Medical Examination of Seafarers. Any such report shall specifically indicate that the candidate was examined as to hearing, vision and general physical and mental condition. This completed form constitutes the issuance of a Medical Certificate by the medical examiner and must be signed by both the medical examiner and examinee.

4.10.2 If the medical examiner imposes restrictions on work (i.e., the job the seafarer will perform, the trade area, time-limit, etc.) these restrictions should be reflected on the form.

4.10.3. If the examinee is found temporarily or permanently unfit for service, he or she should be given an explanation of the reasons and advised on the right and the procedures for making an appeal.

4.10.4. If an examinee is found temporarily unfit, the medical examiner should give advice on the need to make additional tests, to obtain opinions from specialists, to complete dental or other treatment, rehabilitation and/or appropriate medical care. The examinee should be informed of when to return for another examination.

5. Appeals Procedures

5.1. Any seafarer who, after medical examination, has been refused a certificate or has had a limitation imposed on their ability to work, may apply for a further examination by another independent medical practitioner or by an independent medical referee, as defined under section 1.0 above.



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5.2. Notwithstanding all of the Qualifications for Medical Examiners present in section 1.0 above, the independent medical practitioner or independent medical referee should:

- Have higher or at least the same qualifications as the previous medical examiner;
- Be mutually acceptable to the Administrator and most of the representative organizations of ship owners and seafarers; and
- Have two (2) advisers acceptable to the Administrator and most of the representative organizations of shipowners and seafarers to provide practical guidance.

5.3. A shipowner/operator may require an additional examination by another medical examiner if there are valid grounds to believe that a seafarer seeking employment or already employed is unfit for sea service.

5.4. All information of the appeals procedure shall remain confidential between involved parties and shall not be provided to any outside parties.

6. **Protected Health Information (PHI)**

6.1. Definition: PHI is any information which concerns health status, provision of health care, or payment for health care that can be linked to an individual, to include any part of an individual's medical record or payment history.

6.2. **Right of Privacy**

All persons concerned with the conduct of medical examinations, including those who come in contact with medical examination forms, laboratory results and other medical information should ensure the right of privacy of the examinee. Medical records should only be used for determining the fitness of the seafarer for work and enhancing health care. The seafarer shall have the right of access to and receipt of a copy of his/her personal medical data.



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6.3. **Confidentiality**

In accordance with the local and national laws of the country in which any PHI is located, medical examination reports and records (whether electronic or hard copy form), including a copy of the medical certificate and all medical data collected from the examinee, should be clearly marked “CONFIDENTIAL” Additionally, in accordance with the local and national laws of the country in which any PHI is located, PHI should be retained in the files of the medical establishment where the medical certificate was issued, should be kept confidential, used only to facilitate the treatment of the seafarer, and should be made available only to persons authorized with the informed consent of the examinee. Receipt of an examinee’s physical Examination Report/Certificate (form FO-MA-25, Appendix 1) in any regard relating to the examinees fitness for duty.