

# Republic of the Marshall Islands

## MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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### MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY No. 09-20

**To: Owners/Operators, Masters, Nautical Inspectors, Recognized Organizations**

**Subject: CORONAVIRUS DISEASE PRECAUTIONS**

**Date: 10 March 2020**

This Marine Safety Advisory (MSA) supersedes MSA No. 05-20.

#### 1.0 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) is providing the following information and advice on the COVID-19 for RMI-flagged vessels and seafarers. This outbreak has been declared a worldwide emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO). Global surveillance is continual, and cases have been discovered worldwide. Many cases are directly connected to individuals who have visited the affected region in China.

#### 2.0 Vessel Calls in Affected Ports

2.1 WHO remains the primary source of [information](#) for advice on trading and traveling to regions and countries where COVID-19 risks exist. They have stated that, if certain measures are taken, there should be no “unnecessary restrictions of international traffic.” Nevertheless, RMI-flagged vessels are advised to adopt precautionary measures and seek updated information and requirements from local sources prior to making port calls in such areas.

2.2 Follow WHO’s standard recommendations to reduce exposure to, and transmission of, the disease, including:

- Cleaning hands frequently by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
- When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue, then immediately throw the tissue away and wash hands;
- Avoiding close contact with anyone who has fever and cough; and
- Avoiding the consumption of raw or undercooked animal products and the cross-contamination of uncooked foods as per good food safety practices.

This MSA expires one (1) year after its issuance, unless otherwise noted, extended, superseded, or revoked.

- 2.3 Limit or restrict access to vessels when calling at affected areas. Under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), steps may be taken to ensure vessel and crew safety. These could include but are not limited to:
- Refusing entry to anyone appearing ill; and
  - Mandating washing or alcohol hand sanitizing regimes for stevedores and others at the base of the gangway.
- 2.4 Scrupulously clean and disinfect the ship according to its cleaning regime, but particularly spaces used by visitors.
- 2.5 Vessels calling at ports in COVID-19 affected areas should consider whether the ships security plan is correctly implemented, and the crew should be extra vigilant for any stowaways trying to board the ship. It is strongly recommended that a 24-hour security watch be maintained while in port and that additional searches are carried out before departing the port. Specific instructions should be given to watch standers to only allow people to board as required for the ships business. Visitors should not be allowed to access the crew accommodation area without permission and at a minimum an initial screening.
- 2.6 Make certain that there are adequate food, medicines, and fresh water supplies aboard the vessel prior to calling on China or other affected areas. This is to preclude any hardships that may arise due to limited or delayed victualling.

### **3.0 Vessel Inspections and Other Boardings in China**

As of this writing, but subject to daily review:

- The Administrator is temporarily suspending all vessel inspections and other boardings within Chinese ports.
- The Administrator will not inspect vessels arriving at an overseas port from China until 14 days (the incubation period) has elapsed from leaving the last Chinese port.

### **4.0 Crew Contracts**

- 4.1 The Administrator is aware that stringent boarder control measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 has resulted in operators having difficulty in arranging crew changes and repatriating seafarers when their employment agreements expire. As a result, some seafarers employed to work on RMI-flagged ships may exceed the service period as entered in their seafarer employment agreements (SEA).
- 4.2 The Administrator allows for extended SEAs as provided in RMI Marine Notice [7-052-2](#). It also recognizes in contrast to this position that some port States hold a rigid interpretation that a SEA may not be extended beyond 11 months or its original contract date, if less than that period.

- 4.3 The Administrator is handling these COVID-19 contract and repatriation issues on a case-by-case basis. It encourages dialog between the relevant stakeholders (flag State, shipowner, seafarer, and port State) so that a practicable way forward to an already difficult situation may be taken. While it is important that the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006) is complied with and enforced, ships and crew should not be unreasonably detained or delayed per MLC, 2006, Standard 5.2.1.8, because of the lack of flexibility in this unforeseen circumstance.
- 4.4 Shipowners, managers, and crewing agencies are also instructed to think ahead and prepare for seafarer and crew relief in light of the current circumstances.

## **5.0 Additional Information and Resources**

More information, including situational reports and technical guidance, can be found at:

- [IMO Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Public Health Emergency of International Concern and Advice for IMO Member States, Seafarers, and Shipping](#)
- [WHO Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Outbreak](#)
- [WHO Operational Considerations for Managing COVID-19 Cases/Outbreak on Board Ships](#)
- [United States \(US\) Coast Guard Marine Safety Information Bulletin 01-20](#)
- [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)