

# Merchant Marine Circular

Panama Maritime Authority  
General Directorate of Merchant Marine  
Control and Compliance Department

## MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-367

**To:** Shipowners/Operators, Company Security Officers, Legal Representatives of Panamanian Flagged Vessels, Panamanian Merchant Marine Consulates, Recognized Organizations (ROs) and Flag State Inspectors.

**Subject:** Hazard Working Conditions- Health and safety protection and accident prevention, Standard A4.3.

**Reference:** Law N° 2 of January 6, 2009 - Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended.

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### 1. Purpose:

**1.1** The purpose of this Circular is to inform that this Administration has decided to provide guidance to the shipowners or operator to the Panamanian flag vessels, in order to avoid jobs where the crew members are exposed to hazard situations contrary to safety, health and hygiene on board.

### 2. Scope:

**2.1** This administration makes strongly recommendations ensuring that seafarers on board in the Panamanian flag ships are provided with occupational safety and health (OSH) in a safe and hygienic environment.

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3. The shipowner will adopt emergency and accident response action plans and conducts the necessary training and drills for ships as part of its overall safety and health policy within the occupational safety and health policies and programs according to the ISM Code, as amended, referred to in Chapter IX of the SOLAS Convention.
4. A ship as a workplace is comprised of several specific types of workspaces. On cargo ships, examples include the bridge, engine room, hatches, decks and accommodation. On passenger ships, in addition to the technical workspaces related to the ship's engine operations, there are also workspaces used for the on-board hotel and catering services. To ensure that work is carried out safely, certain basic ergonomic requirements should be adhered to in order to prevent seafarers from working for long periods in awkward positions such as on their knees, with arms and shoulders raised or with back and/or neck bent, or from repeating these postures and movements frequently.
5. The shipowner should develop a risk assessment of working duties, both while work is performed and also during planning. Risk assessments should include an evaluation of the equipment and other technical aids applied.
6. Regarding to the biological risk factors and hazards the shipowner or operator will take into consideration the guidelines provide by the WHO in, [http://www.who.int/occupational\\_health/topics/risks\\_biological/en/](http://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/risks_biological/en/)
7. The shipowner may delegate this responsibility to the master, with the active participation of the safety and security. The ship's master should ensure that:
  - *reasonable precautions to prevent occupational accidents, injuries and diseases on board ship, including through the provision of all necessary appropriately-sized personal protective equipment and measures to reduce and prevent the risk of exposure to harmful levels of ambient factors and chemicals, as well as the risk of injury or disease that may arise from the use of equipment and machinery on board ships;*

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- the shipowner's OSH policy and programme is implemented on board ship and clearly communicated to all crew (ISM Code);
- a positive safety culture exists on the ship, including reasonable precautions and continuous safety improvement to prevent occupational accidents, injuries and diseases on board ship;
- seafarers are encouraged to participate actively and express their views on safe and healthy working conditions and risk assessments, without fear of dismissal or other prejudicial measures;
- work is planned, carried out and supervised so as to minimize the possibility of accidents, injuries or diseases;
- seafarers are assigned only to work to which they are suited by age, state of health and skills, and no seafarer under the age of 18 is assigned inappropriate duties;
- appropriate notices and instructions are issued in a clear and easily understood manner, in a language or languages verified to be understood by the entire crew (MLC-A4.3, Para 7);
- all statutory drills and musters are conducted realistically, effectively and conscientiously at the required intervals and comply with any applicable rules and regulations;
- practice and training are given in emergency procedures and special emergency equipment usage is demonstrated to the crew at regular intervals;
- operating manuals, vessel plans, national laws and regulations, safety procedures and so on are available to seafarers requiring such information to conduct their work safely;
- one or more safety representatives are appointed or elected, and regular meetings of the safety committee are held on board a ship on which there are five or more seafarers. If such a committee is not required, information on safety and health should be communicated in other ways;
- all seafarers on board as well as the shipowner are informed of the membership of the safety committee, and its members are competent to perform their duties;

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- the safety committee is informed of notices issued by both the competent authority and the shipowner related to the safety and health of seafarers; and;
- all accidents or near accidents, injuries and diseases are investigated, recorded and reported in compliance with national laws and regulations and the shipowner's procedures.

**8. From the provisions of the previous paragraph, the seafarers should:**

- actively participate in promoting a safety culture and express their views on safe and healthy working conditions and risk assessments;
- cooperate with the master and the shipowner to implement prescribed OSH policies and other measures;
- participate in OSH meetings and do everything possible to maintain both their own safety and health and those of other persons on board;
- properly use the preventive principles and utilize available and clothing as instructed and otherwise when appropriate (MLC, 2006, Guideline B4.3.4, Para 1);
- report immediately to their immediate supervisor any situation which could pose a hazard and which they cannot properly handle themselves;
- have the right to remove themselves from dangerous situations or operations when they have good reason to believe that there is an imminent and serious danger to their safety and health (ILO: Accident prevention on board ship at sea and in port). In such circumstances, initially the seafarer's supervisor should immediately be informed of the danger; and
- communicate effectively regarding safety risks, verify that the instructions have been understood and provide an opportunity for clarification to be sought.

**9. The work on board ships may lead to seafarers being exposed to biological agents, taking into consideration "biological agents" means micro-organisms which may provoke an infection, allergy or toxicity. The adverse health effects of exposure to biological agents include infectious diseases, allergies and toxicity.**

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**10.** The shipowner should take into consideration the biological hazards when planning work on board and implementing measures to minimize exposure to such hazards, taking into consideration the international health regulations (WHO) and the Guide to ship sanitation, third edition, 2012, and these issues:

- detection, where possible – for example, by testing drinking water;
- collection, storage and disposal of waste;
- special treatment of waste prior to disposal;
- prohibition of eating and drinking in work areas;
- offering relevant vaccinations;
- documented inspections;
- following the ILO Guidelines on the training of ships' cooks; and
- any other that is considered necessary.

**11.** The Shipowners consider the relevant advice promulgated by the WHO, the IMO, the ILO and other appropriate bodies in this regard and act appropriately by providing necessary information to seafarers and taking precautionary measures based in WHO: Biological risk factors and hazards.

**12.** The shipowners will provide special measures for women seafarers, including pregnant and breastfeeding seafarers. Special attention should be given to the needs of women seafarers in terms of work arrangements and appropriate welfare facilities should be provided.

**13.** For ships carrying dangerous goods the shipowners should take into account the regulations of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG) of the IMO.

**14.** For the infection prevention and control in health care for preparedness and response to outbreaks the shipowners taking into consideration the WHO tools in [http://www.who.int/csr/bioriskreduction/infection\\_control/publications/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/bioriskreduction/infection_control/publications/en/)



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15. The shipowner or operator shall take all necessary measures to ensure a safe transport, stowage, segregation, loading, unloading and securing of cargoes, and regulations in relation to ballast water (IMO Resolution MEPC.127(53) safety procedures for the ship and the crew).
16. All accidents or near accidents related to the hazard or dangerous conditions should be reported according to the format attached on the circular MMC-274 and sent to the Segumar Office at [mlc@segumar.com](mailto:mlc@segumar.com) and [casualty@segumar.com](mailto:casualty@segumar.com)

**October, 2024** - New Point on the Paragraph 7.

**October, 2023** - Updated the circular format

**May, 2018.**

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