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Contingency Guidelines for Ships and Seafarers against Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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Contingency Guidelines for Ships and Seafarers against Coronavirus (COVID-19)

(6 April 2020, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, Republic of Korea)

Scope

The guidelines apply to all Korean-flagged ships, fishing vessels and seafarers who bear the certificates issued by the Republic of Korea. Further guidance is provided.

In applying the guidelines, IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.5 dated 17 March, 2020 and Circular Letter 2020-1('20.3.2), 2020-2('20.3.12) issued by the State Control in the Asia-Pacific Region have been referred to by the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries.

Background

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, various restrictions have been placed on the arrival and departure of ships and the movement of seafarers as well as the movement of surveyors and auditors for surveys/audits between countries and survey on board, making it difficult to comply with the regulations set out in the various international conventions.

The Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea, in considering the COVID-19 outbreak as a force majeure, has decided the following temporary measures for the Korean-flagged ships and seafarers.

The validity of ship's certificates

When a ship, which is not able to undergo survey or audit due to the COVID-19, makes a request to extend the validity of the certificate to move to a place where survey or audit is possible, the government of the Republic of Korea will grant an extension for up to 3 to 6 months in accordance with the relevant International Convention standards.

A ship can request the details on the extension of the validity of the certificate from the Recognized Organizations (ROs)**.

* Ship survey certificate, international agreement certificate, ship safety management certificate, international ship security certificate (ISSC), interim ship safety management certificate (six months), etc.

** Korean Register (KR), Bureau Veritas (BV), Korea Maritime Transportation Safety Authority (KOMSA)

Remote surveys, etc.

The Republic of Korea has decided to temporarily adopt remote surveys, etc. in the following manner, provided that it is not possible for a surveyor or auditor to perform a survey or audit in the work site due to COVID-19.

* (Procedure) (Shipowner) Application → (Recognized Organization) Review of submitted documents → (If necessary) Approval/consultation with Government → (Recognized Organization) Conduct remote surveys, etc. → (If passed) Endorsement/issuance/sending of report/certificate → (Recognized Organization) Report to the Ministry

• Ship survey: If it is not possible for a ship surveyor to conduct a survey on board, a remote survey using photographs, online interview, etc. may be adopted in case of simple surveys, including a temporary survey, which do not hinder the safe operation of ships or fishing vessels.

• Audit to attest the ship safety management system: If it is not possible for an auditor to conduct an audit on board an ocean-going vessel of the Korean flag, for interim audit, it can be carried out remotely by using a satellite telephone, EMS, etc.

- * For the vessel that has passed the remote audit, the certificate is issued on the condition that the vessel will undergo a site confirmation later on.
- Audit to attest the ship security management system: If it is not possible for an auditor to conduct a security audit at a foreign port during audit period, for interim, temporary and renewal audits, they can be carried out remotely by using mail, fax, video telephone, etc. (except for initial audit)

Crew changes, employment period and validity of certificates

In order to prevent Korean-flagged vessels, which may not be able to comply with the requirements of International Conventions pertaining to crew changes, employment period and the validity of seafarers' certificates due to COVID-19, from being subjected to unnecessary detentions at foreign ports, the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries will provide an official letter requesting the Port Authority to cooperate, when requested by shipowners.

The official letter, which is a measure based on the Joint Statement IMO-WHO and guidelines from Port State Control in the Asia-Pacific Region, is issued to provide explanation that the non-compliance with the requirements of international conventions is due to COVID-19. When it comes to the extension of maximum period of work on board, the health and safety of seafarers are considered as the top priority and an extension is only granted when it is agreed by the seafarer involved.

Port State Control

Based on guidelines from Port State Control in the Asia-Pacific Region, the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea has decided to conduct Port State Control inspections for foreign vessels calling at Korean ports by taking the pragmatic approach as follows:

- Pragmatic PSC inspections: When a plan or process containing equivalent solutions to address the COVID-19 and letters of dispensation exemption by the flag State is presented to Port State Authority, PSC inspections will be conducted by taking the pragmatic approach after its relevance to COVID-19 is confirmed.

Providing relevant information

This contingency plan has been developed taking into account the currently applicable information concerning the COVID-19 crisis. Any significant developments necessitating a revision of this document will be considered by the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries.

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