

Republic of the Marshall Islands

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY No. 26-20

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

Subject: **COVID-19 - SEAFARER EMPLOYEMENT AGREEMENTS**

Date: **15 July 2020**

This Advisory establishes the Republic of the Marshall Island (RMI) Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) expectations for the repatriation of seafarers due to Coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

During these unprecedeted times pre-planning is key. The Administrator allows for extended seafarer employment agreements (SEAs), provided any extension is mutually agreed in writing between the seafarer and the shipowner (RMI Marine Notice [7-052-2](#)). However, every effort must be made to repatriate the seafarer according to their contractual obligations and avoid fatigue. Operators should be prepared to arrange repatriation prior to the end of the extension period.

Where crew changes and repatriation are not possible and SEAs have been or will be extended because of restrictions due to COVID-19, operators are requested to implement the following:

1. Develop a plan for repatriation. This may require novel solutions. Operators are reminded that some port State control (PSC) require this plan to be shared with the Administrator.
2. Maintain a record on board the ship of all efforts to repatriate the seafarer so that it can be provided to PSC if requested.
3. Maintain evidence that the seafarers have been consulted about staying onboard and advised of how their entitlements will be protected and plans for their repatriation.

Operators are encouraged to incorporate these actions for dealing with this crisis into their procedures as it is difficult to determine how long this pandemic will last. Also, operators are again reminded of the dangers of fatigue for those crew members who have been on board for longer than 12 months. Some PSC authorities will require those crew members to be repatriated prior to the ship’s departure. Similar consideration should be given to those seafarers on shorter contracts who have exceeded their original contracts by 50%.

Please contact the Administrator at Seafarers@register-iri.com, with the relevant [Regional Office](#) in copy, should you encounter PSC issues caused by unavoidable extensions to SEAs.

This MSA expires one (1) year after its issuance, unless otherwise noted, extended, superseded, or revoked.