



CIRCULAR NO.3-2023/MARITIME SAFETY

14 JULY 2023

This Circular serves to provide regular information on maritime safety.

The Solomon Islands Maritime Authority (SIMA) Act 2018, the Shipping Act 1998 as amended and their subsidiary laws prescribe obligations, rights and standards for all registered vessels on any voyage and in any waters, and to every vessel in Solomon Islands waters to any vessel on which Solomon Islands seamen are employed.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SHIPPING OPERATIONS AND SAFETY

The Circular no.7-2022 issued in October 2022 provided detailed information on conditions for the safe manning of vessels and the employment of seafarers which include:

- ✓ a **valid Safe Manning Certificate (SMC) and crew list signed by the master on board a vessel registered in Solomon Islands** – as of 1 July 2023, 89% of domestic ships hold a Safe Manning Certificate which contains the number of crew members and their minimum qualification to hold their function on board.
- ✓ each crew member has his/her **valid certificate of competency** that has been revalidated within in last 5 years of the issuance or previous revalidation date. The process of revalidation requires the Advanced Safety Course and/or a Refresher Course. The Refresher Course is sufficient only if the Certificate of competency is still valid and there is evidence of participation to safety drills in the concerned seafarer Seaman Record Book, and
- ✓ each crew member on the crew list has signed **an employment agreement** with the shipowner/operator and approved by the Director SIMA.

SIMA developed [guidelines for the employment of seafarers](#). The implementation of Seafarer Employment Agreement (SEA) has started on 1 July 2023 as per the process of SEA implementation described in a [presentation](#) delivered at the last meeting of the Solomon Islands Maritime Transport Association (SIMTA) held on 29 June 2023.

DID YOU KNOW?

WHAT ARE THE APPLICABLE STANDARDS FOR VESSELS REGISTERED IN SOLOMON ISLANDS?

Before a vessel is registered in Solomon Islands, the ship owner or operator must demonstrate the compliance of the vessel to the applicable standards which are:

1. **if the vessel is more than 500 gross tonnage (or 400 gross tonnage for pollution prevention related standards) and will undertake international voyages**, the Shipping (Registration) Regulations 2010 section 29(2) requires the vessel to be surveyed and comply to all international conventions.
2. **If the vessel is less than 500 gross tonnage (or 400 gross tonnage for pollution prevention related standards)**, the Shipping (Registration) Regulations 2010 section 29(1) requires the vessel to be surveyed and comply to the Shipping (Non Convention Vessel Safety) Regulations 2006; depending on the type of voyages, the vessel may also be surveyed and have to comply with some international conventions.
3. **If the vessel is more than 500 gross tonnage (or 400 gross tonnage for pollution prevention related standards) but will operate exclusively within Solomon Islands waters**, the Shipping (Registration) Regulations 2010 section 29(4) authorizes SIMA to apply the Shipping (Non Convention Vessel Safety) Regulations 2006.

SIMA must be informed as early as possible and not less than 6 months before purchasing a vessel not registered in Solomon Islands. SIMA process includes an initial documentation review, on-site surveys including shore and sea trials.

Safety management and security standards apply to vessels of more than 500 gross tonnage even if they undertake international voyages occasionally. This includes implementation of a Safety Management System (SMS) and a Ship Security Plan (SSP).

CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL ON BOARD VESSELS

Reissue of information related to the consumption of alcohol on board domestic ships in Solomon Islands ([Circular 7-2022](#))

The consumption of alcohol is a persistent issue on board domestic vessels in Solomon Islands. It includes officers and masters which, in several cases, caused delay of the vessel's departure and in some cases serious concerns for the safety of the persons on board when the vessel is at sea.

A seafarer found to be under the influence of alcohol, or any prohibited or narcotic drug while on duty commits a disciplinary offence under section 131 of the Shipping Act 1998 as amended. For this purpose, SIMA considers a seafarer on duty when he/she is registered on the crew list of an operational vessel and the seafarer is under the influence of alcohol or drug on board at any time during working hours and out of working hours when the vessel is scheduled to depart to sea. If, for the reason of being under the influence of alcohol or drug, a seafarer is absent from duty and causes delay in the vessel operation or departure, or cannot assume watch at sea, it is considered as the same offence.

Any report of above misbehaviour is treated as serious offences committed by a seafarer under the Act and is severely sanctioned as prescribed by the Act, including the suspension or cancellation of the certificate of competency, proficiency or recognition which prevent the seafarer to be on any crew list of vessels in Solomon Islands waters.

This issue has been discussed between SIMA and SIMTA at the last SIMTA meeting held on 29 June 2023. The meeting resolved to address the issue by close collaboration between ship owners and operators and SIMA. SIMA will strictly apply the provisions of the Shipping Act 1998 as amended and will consider as a serious offence to the Act the consumption of alcohol on board domestic ships by crew members, being on board a vessel under the influence of alcohol or creating an unsafe situation or delay to a vessel due to crew members under the influence of alcohol. In addition, the master and responsible officers will be held responsible for not taking action and/or not reporting the consumption of alcohol on board a vessel or any person under the influence of alcohol on board a vessel.

For such an offence, Director SIMA will investigate and systematically consider the suspension or cancellation of the concerned seafarer's certificate of competency, certificate of proficiency or basic safety certificate. Discipline will also be considered against responsible officers failing to report the consumption of alcohol.

CONTACT

All shipowners/operators are encouraged to provide feedback on this circular to the SIMA's Department of Shipping Operations and Safety to improve safety of all at sea, clean seas, and a vibrant maritime industry in Solomon Islands.

For anything related to maritime safety, please contact Jonah Mitau, Manager Shipping Operations and Safety at jonah.mitau@sima.gov.sb or visit SIMA's website at: <https://www.sima.gov.sb/>.