



CIRCULAR NO.3-2026/MARITIME SAFETY

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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(s) in the Solomon Islands waters to any vessel on which Solomon Islands seafarers are employed.

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SHIPPING OPERATIONS AND SAFETY

PROHIBITION OF POSSESSION, CONSUMPTION, USE, DISTRIBUTION, TRAFFICKING, OR CARRIAGE OF DRUGS, ILLICIT SUBSTANCES AND OTHER PROHIBITED ITEMS ON BOARD VESSELS

The Solomon Islands Maritime Authority (SIMA) reminds all shipowners, operators, masters, officers, crew members, passengers, charterers, suppliers, and other maritime stakeholders that the possession, consumption, use, distribution, trafficking, or carriage of drugs, illicit substances and other prohibited items on board any vessel is strictly prohibited.

The Shipping Act 1998 as amended, and the Solomon Islands Maritime Authority (Carriage and Registration of Passengers) Maritime Order 2025 provide for the safe, secure and lawful operation of vessels, including duties to control the carriage of passengers, vehicle, baggage, cargo and other items on board, to refuse unsafe or unlawful carriage, and to prevent, detect and report the possession, use, trafficking or carriage of dangerous drugs, illicit substances and other prohibited items.

In addition to supporting criminal activity affecting communities across Solomon Islands, including young people., the presence, possession, use, trafficking or carriage of drugs, illicit substances, and prohibited items on board vessels poses a serious threat to maritime safety, security, and lawful vessel operations. These activities endanger passengers, crew, and other persons on board; compromise safe navigation and vessel operation; undermine vessel public safety and vessel security; place cargo and property at risk; may harm the marine environment; and adversely affect good order and discipline on board.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS AND MASTERS

Shipowners, operators and masters are therefore requested to effectively implement these legal requirements on board all vessels, including by prominently displaying clear warnings to passengers, crew, suppliers and other persons before boarding, and by communicating the same warnings by public address or other effective means prior to departure and, where necessary, during the voyage, as shown below.

**“STRICTLY PROHIBITED ONBOARD ALL VESSELS”
POSSESSION, CONSUMPTION, DISTRIBUTION AND
CARRIAGE OF DRUGS, ILLICIT SUBSTANCES AND OTHER
PROHIBITED ITEMS.**

SHIP OWNERS, OPERATORS AND MASTERS SHALL:

The ship owners, operators and masters shall:

- ensure that their master and crew members are aware of applicable laws and the prohibition of the possession, consumption, use, distribution, trafficking, or carriage of drugs, illicit substances and other prohibited items on board any vessel;

- passengers, charterers and suppliers are advised that drugs, illicit substances and other prohibited items are not permitted on board vessels and search of vehicle, baggage, cargo and other items may be carried out;
- ensure that any suspected breach, or any discovery of drugs, illicit substances or other prohibited items, is promptly reported to Police, SIMA and any other responsible authority, and that appropriate records are maintained.

MASTERS SHALL:

The master has the overall responsibility for the safety, security and lawful operation of the vessel and shall:

- maintain safety, security, good order and discipline on board the vessel at all times,
- take all reasonable measures to prevent the possession, use, trafficking or carriage of drugs, illicit substances and other prohibited items on board the vessel,
- ensure that crew members comply with company policies, maritime laws and lawful instructions relating to safety and security,
- conduct or direct searches where reasonable grounds exist to suspect the presence of drugs, illicit substances or other prohibited items,
- refuse embarkation, or refuse the carriage of any passenger, vehicle, cargo, baggage or stores, where a safety, security or legal risk is identified,
- secure and preserve evidence where drugs, illicit substances or other prohibited items are discovered.
- promptly notify the ship owner, operator and relevant authorities of incidents involving the possession, use, trafficking or carriage of dangerous drugs, illicit substances and other prohibited items on board the vessel,
- take any necessary action to safeguard passengers, crew members, the vessel, cargo and the marine environment.

RIGHT TO SEARCH

Where reasonable grounds exist to suspect the presence of drugs, illicit substances or other prohibited items, the Master may conduct or direct search inspections of:

- personal belongings and baggage,
- cargo and freight,
- vehicles carried on board,
- accommodation and passenger spaces,
- vessel's stores, lockers and storage areas,
- any other area of the vessel where prohibited items may be concealed.

Any crew member, passenger, charterer, supplier or other person found in possession, using, distributing, trafficking or attempting to carry drugs, illicit substances or other prohibited items on board vessels will be refused embarkation, removed from the vessel, and reported to law enforcement authorities.

REFUSAL OF SEARCH

Any person on board a vessel is required to comply fully with applicable maritime laws relating to drugs, illicit substances and other prohibited items. A person who refuses to comply with a lawful search may be refused embarkation, refused carriage of baggage, cargo or vehicle, or removed from the vessel, and the matter will be reported to law enforcement authorities.

CONTACT & INFORMATION

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

Subsidiary laws (regulations and maritime orders) prescribe standards that apply to all vessels creating the same level-playing field in the Solomon Islands. These laws can be found at: <https://www.sima.gov.sb/acts-regulations/>.

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