REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION

CIRCULAR No 11 Our ref 08.03.2021 No 17.1-1/11

Operation of the maritime sector in Estonia during the pandemic of COVID-19 in 2021

In Estonia, no emergency situation has been established in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, certain restrictions are in force which continue to have an effect on the maritime sector. As the current situation may change quickly, we suggest turning to the Transport Administration for updated information. This is an overview of the situation as of 5 March 2021.

1. Repatriation of seafarers

1.1. Crossing the Estonian state border for crew changes

On the basis of Government of the Republic Order No. 282 of 19.08.2020 "Measures and restrictions necessary for preventing the spread of COVID-19", restrictions continue to be imposed on foreign nationals entering Estonia. The restrictions established by the Order do not apply to asymptomatic persons who are ships' crew members servicing international means of transport and persons performing repairs or warranty or maintenance work on such means of transport, and who arrive in Estonia for the performance of duties.

Such persons are allowed to enter Estonia on the basis of Government of the Republic Regulation No. 268 of 13.08.2002 "Procedure for Permitting Crew Members to Estonia", i.e. according to the ordinary procedure. They are not required to have a valid test result and they are not subject to compulsory testing, nor are they obliged to remain quarantined.

Crew change is possible in ports which have official border crossing points of the Police and Border Guard Board. Ports with considerable international vessel traffic are the following:

Sillamäe, Kunda, Muuga, Miiduranna, Vanasadam, Paljassaare, Lahesuu, Vene-Balti, Bekkeri, Meeruse, Paldiski North, Paldiski South, Heltermaa, Rohuküla, Kuivastu, Virtsu, Roomassaare, Saaremaa and Pärnu.

The total list of ports which have official border crossing points is available on the website of the Police and Border Guard Board.

1.2. Repatriation of Estonian seafarers from foreign countries

Employers are obligated to repatriate crew members of ships flying foreign flags upon expiry of their contracts. If the employer fails to fulfil this obligation, seafarers should contact the representative of their flag state.

If repatriation is not permitted because of the restrictions imposed in the country of location and help from the state of Estonia is needed, contact the nearest Estonian embassy or call the emergency phone number +372 5301 9999 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also the Transport Administration ought to be informed via the general e-mail merendus@transpordiamet.ee.

1.3. Disembarkation of crew members at Estonian ports and calls by foreign vessels

When visiting Estonian ports, asymptomatic crew members have to take into consideration the requirements established with Government Order No. 268 of 13.08.2002 "Procedure for Permitting Crew Members to Estonia". Restrictions on disembarkation have not been imposed; regular disembarkation of crew members while their ship stays at an Estonian port is subject to possible restrictions imposed in the country.

In case a crew member develops symptoms of disease, a health declaration must be submitted via the electronic maritime information system (EMDE) to the Health Board.

2. Seafarers' certificates

2.1. Extension of seafarers' certificates and endorsements

The Seafarers' Certification Department of the Transport Administration is open at the usual hours at the address Lume 9.

Maritime educational and training institutions provide training and refresher and updating courses in accordance with the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 22 February, training courses for groups are temporarily prohibited, but as the situation may change, we recommend sending inquiries about the current situation directly to educational institutions that organise training courses.

Crew members who are still on a voyage and cannot return to Estonia due to the restrictions established, and whose certificates have expired during their voyage, can still renew their certificates via e-learning. More detailed information is given in Transport Administration Circular No 9 of 26.02.2021.

2.2. Seafarers' health certificates

Health examinations of seafarers are performed in accordance with the regular procedure. A list of recognised medical centres can be found on the Health Board website. We recommend contacting them before health examination appointments in order to check whether there are any restrictions on the provision of health care services arising from the pandemic.

Seafarers' health certificates issued by Estonian physicians, which expire during the voyage due to prolongation of the voyage caused by the Covid-19 virus, will be extended by three months in accordance with STCW Regulation I/9.

3. Ship supervision and inspections

3.1. Inspection of foreign-flagged ships in Estonian ports

Port State Control inspections of foreign-flagged ships visiting Estonian ports are performed on a call by call basis and after possible risks have been evaluated.

3.2. Inspections of Estonian-flagged ships

Estonian-flagged ships are subject to routine inspections in Estonia. In foreign states, the inspection of Estonia-flagged vessels is carried out by considering each case separately.

Recreational craft

3.3. Training of skippers

As of 22 February, training courses for groups are temporarily prohibited, including training of skippers. Since the situation may change, it is recommended that in order to inquire about the current situation, the Transport Administration should be contacted at the e-mail address merendus@transpordiamet.ee.

3.4. Surveys of recreational craft

Surveys of recreational craft are carried out, with reasonable precautions still being taken and the safety measures established for the protection of health considered.

3.5. Documents to be carried while navigating at sea with recreational craft

Foreign nationals arriving at Estonian ports will be advised that they are also subject to the existing restrictions on entering the Republic of Estonia.

4. Navigation in Estonian waters

4.1. Aids to Navigation and navigational information

Seamless operation of the aids to navigation in Estonian waters is ensured as usual and no restrictions have been imposed due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Navigational information is being published via the ordinary channels.

4.2. Fairway dues

From 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, all ships arriving at an Estonian port or a roadstead of an Estonian port are exempted from paying fairway dues.

4.3. Pilotage

The pilotage service is being provided in the customary manner and no special measures have been established.

4.4. Vessel traffic management and reporting formalities

The VTS and GOFREP systems continue operation in the ordinary manner and the safety of vessel traffic is ensured.

The electronic maritime information system (EMDE) functions as usual; no additional reporting obligations have been added. As before, a completed health declaration form must be submitted through EMDE if there is a case of infectious disease on board.

5. Port supervision

All supervisory activities are performed in ports, taking health protection precautions. The deadlines for port and port facility security inspections and port and port facility exercises and drills are extended in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2021/267 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2021.

6. Earlier circulars

I herewith revoke Circular No. 1-1-6/1389 of 29.05.2020 by Director General of the Maritime Administration “Operation of the maritime sector after conclusion of the emergency situation”.

(signed digitally)

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