

Medical guideline for seafarers

**This guideline is for all seafarers applying for or
holding a seafarer certificate**

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Last updated: May 2019

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1. Overview

This guideline provides general information for seafarers about the medical requirements they need to meet.

1.1 Who should read this guideline?

The information in this guideline is for seafarers applying for, or already holding:

- ring-fenced certificates¹
 - national certificates
 - STCW certificates
 - STCW-F certificates.
- See sections 2 and 4
- See sections 3 and 4

1.2 Proving you are medically fit

If you are applying for, or renewing a maritime certificate, you need to prove you meet the medical fitness and eyesight standards. To do this, you need a medical examination and a certificate of medical fitness. Some eyesight standards must be tested by an optometrist, see section 4.

You must renew your certificate of medical fitness before it expires if you are working at sea.

If you are one of the seafarers who ring-fenced their ticket(s), you will need a medical certificate to keep working. The certificate of medical fitness will be due two years after the date your verification of status (VoS) card was issued.

1.3 Medical exam

The medical examination of seafarers includes, but is not limited to testing the following:

- Are there any matters that may render the seafarer unfit for duty?
- Can the seafarer safely perform the duties covered by their maritime certificate?
- Is the seafarer sufficiently healthy to handle the challenging conditions experienced on-board ships – including in emergencies?
- Does the seafarer have any medical condition likely to be aggravated by service at sea?
- Is issuing the certificate consistent with maintaining the safety of vessels at sea while protecting the seafarer's health?
- Is there any risk to the seafarer's health and safety, other crew or passengers, and/or the safety of the ship?
- If there is a safety risk, does proximity to shore lower the risk to health and safety and the safety of the ship?

¹ Before September 2017, seafarers could register their old or legacy certificate as 'ring-fenced'. Ring-fencing means seafarers can continue using their certificate without moving to one of the new SeaCert certificates.

1. Overview (continued)

1.4 What are the different medical categories?

To work on a ship you must hold a certificate of medical fitness with an A, A (T), or B medical category.

Medical categories			
A	Unrestricted sea service	C	Temporarily unfit for sea service
A (T)	Unrestricted sea service (temporary)	D	Indefinitely unfit for sea service
B	Restricted sea service only	E	Permanently unfit for sea service

Categories **C**, **D** and **E** certificates show you are not fit for work at sea.

1.5 Once you have the certificate

You are responsible for:

- carrying the certificate of medical fitness when working on a ship
- working within any restrictions stated on the certificate of medical fitness. For example, the certificate may restrict the seafarer to within restricted limits, or wearing hearing aids.
- advising Maritime NZ if you develop a medical condition that stops you from safely using your maritime certificate. It is an offence to fail to tell the Director of any known information that is relevant to your fit and proper person status.

Disclaimer:

This guideline provides information and an explanation about the requirements set out in the maritime rules, but is not a substitute for the rules themselves, which are the law. This guideline refers to provisions in Maritime Rules Part 34, Medical Standards. In this guideline, any references to 'we' or Maritime NZ are references to the Director or a person acting under the Director's delegated authority.

maritimenz.govt.nz/rules

The next section sets out who you can get a certificate of medical fitness from and when you must have the certificate.

2. Seafarers that have national or ring-fenced certificates

Seafarers that have national or ring-fenced certificates should read this section. If you have an STCW or STCW-F certificate skip to the next page.

2.1 Who can you get a certificate of medical fitness from?

You can get a certificate of medical fitness issued by any registered New Zealand GP.

2.2 When do you need a certificate of medical fitness?

National certificates

You need a certificate of medical fitness when applying for a maritime certificate. You must renew your certificate of medical fitness before it expires if you are working at sea.

Ring-fenced certificate holders

You will need a medical certificate to keep working. The certificate of medical fitness will be due two years after your verification of status (VoS) card was issued.

You must renew your certificate of medical fitness before it expires if you are working at sea.

What documents should you take to the medical examination?

- photo I.D.
- your maritime certificate, or information on the maritime certificates you hold
- print the *CERTIFICATE of Medical Fitness–National or Ring-fenced seafarers* from the Maritime NZ website.
- A copy of your eyesight test if you must have your vision tested by an optometrist. Check the table in section 4.

3. Seafarers that have STCW or STCW-F certificates

Seafarers that have STCW or STCW-F certificates should read this section.

3.1 Who can you get a certificate of medical fitness from?

If you have an STCW or STCW-F certificate you must get a certificate of medical fitness issued by an approved medical practitioner. Certificates of medical fitness issued in foreign countries may be valid in New Zealand if the certificate was issued in accordance with STCW.

What is an approved medical practitioner?

Approved medical practitioners are registered medical practitioners approved by the Director of Maritime NZ. Approved medical practitioners are authorised to issue certificates of medical fitness to seafarers who hold STCW and STCW-F certificates. The list of approved medical practitioners is on the Maritime NZ website:

maritimenz.govt.nz/approvedGPs

3.2 When do you need a certificate of medical fitness?

You need a certificate of medical fitness when applying for a maritime certificate. You must renew your certificate of medical fitness before it expires if you are working at sea.

What documents should you take to the medical examination?

- photo I.D.
- your maritime certificate(s), or information on the maritime certificate(s) you hold
- print the *Medical Examination FORM for STCW or STCW-F seafarers* from the Maritime NZ website. Fill out section one of the form.
- print the *CERTIFICATE of Medical Fitness-STCW or STCW-F seafarers* from the Maritime NZ website
- a copy of your eyesight test if you must have your vision tested by an optometrist. Check the table on the next page to see if you must have your vision tested by an optometrist.

4. Eyesight standards

4.1 Who can conduct your eyesight test?

Certificate type	Who can conduct your eyesight test?	
	Doctor issuing medical certificate*	Optometrist
Ring Fenced Certificates - all types	✓	
New certificates		
National Engineering certificate	✓	
National Deck certificate**		✓
STCW Deck Certificates**		✓
STCW Engineering Certificates	✓	
STCW GMDSS certificates	✓	
STCW-F Deck Certificates**		✓
Renewal and Transition of Certificates		
National Engineering certificate	✓	
National Deck certificate	✓	
STCW Deck Certificates	✓	
STCW Engineering Certificates	✓	
STCW GMDSS certificates	✓	
STCW-F Deck Certificates	✓	

*If the Doctor has any concerns about the test results, they may refer you to a registered optometrist for further testing.

****Note:**

If you are applying for a new deck certificate you should see an optometrist before your appointment with the doctor. This avoids extra visits to your doctor. You can find a New Zealand registered optometrist at the following website:

www.odob.health.nz

4. Eyesight standards (continued)

The eyesight test

The doctor or optometrist will test whether your eyesight is good enough to safely do your job. There are specific standards for eyesight you will need to pass. The eyesight standards are slightly higher for seafarers with deck certificates compared to the standards for seafarers with engineering certificates.

The colour vision test

If you have one of the following types of maritime certificates you will need to have a colour vision test:

- National deck certificates
- STCW deck certificates
- STCW engineering or GMDSS certificates

If you fail the colour vision test and you have a National deck certificate, GMDSS or STCW engineering certificate, a restricted certificate may be issued. Colour vision tests are valid for six years.

More on eyesight standards

If you would like more information on the eyesight standards please see the guidance document for your certificate on the Maritime NZ website:

- *GUIDANCE for medical fitness – National or Ring-fenced seafarers*
- *GUIDANCE for medical fitness – STCW or STCW-F.*

maritimenz.govt.nz/medicalforms

Monocular vision – ring fenced deck certificates

If you have monocular vision and you have a ring-fenced deck certificate you can meet a different distance vision standard: at least 6/60 without a corrective lens, or 6/6 with a corrective lens.

5. Injury, vaccination and other matters

This section explains when vaccinations are necessary, what to do when returning from injury or illness and other issues.

Describing your work on the ship

At your medical exam you should describe the work you do on the ship in a typical day to the doctor. You should tell the doctor how long it takes the ship to return to port after a medical emergency. Knowing more about your job helps the doctor to make a fair decision about your fitness for work at sea.

Receiving a category B, C, D, or E certificate

If you are issued with a category B, C, D or E certificate you can request a second examination by emailing seafarers@maritimenz.govt.nz.

When do certificates of medical fitness expire?

Certificates of medical fitness expire after a maximum of two years (for seafarers over 18). The doctor may choose to issue the certificate for a shorter period of time. The expiry date is written on the certificate of medical fitness.

Vaccinations

If you are employed on a commercial vessel that is operating in unlimited waters, you must carry an acceptable certificate indicating the type, place and date you received all of your vaccinations.

Return from injury or illness

You must advise Maritime NZ if you develop a medical condition that stops you from safely using your maritime certificate. It is an offence to fail to tell the Director of any known information that is relevant to your fit and proper person status.

You must be re-examined by an approved medical practitioner before you start work if you have:

- been unable to work for 30 days or more due to illness or injury
- left or been taken off a ship for health reasons.

Further information

To find more information on what will be covered in the examination see the relevant guidance document on the Maritime NZ website: *GUIDANCE for medical fitness – National or Ring-fenced seafarers*, or *GUIDANCE for medical fitness – STCW or STCW-F*.

maritimenz.govt.nz/medicalforms

5. Injury, vaccination (continued)

Contact us for help

If you can't find the information you need, send us an email:

seafarers@maritimenz.govt.nz

Or you can phone us toll free.

0508 22 55 22

Tell us what you need help with and remember to include your contact details (email address and phone numbers).