

GP SUMMARY GUIDE for medical fitness – National or Ring-fenced seafarers

Note:

Any New Zealand registered GP can examine a seafarer for the purpose of holding or retaining “National” or “Ring-fenced” certificates. (Note: This does not apply to medicals for STCW International certificates.)

This document gives step by step instructions for examining seafarers that have National or Ring-fenced maritime certificates. Read this checklist in conjunction with the guidance available on the website: maritimenz.govt.nz/seafarers

First steps

Get blank medical certificate - colour copies from maritimenz.govt.nz/medicalforms

(if seafarer hasn't provided).

1. Confirm relevant maritime certificates (different eyesight standards may apply).
 - Check - If medical certificate is for a new maritime deck certificate (not renewal), their eyesight and colour vision must be tested by a registered optometrist.
 - *A list of maritime certificates and seafarers' maximum operating distances from the coast is in Appendix 1 of the guidance. If the seafarer has a VoS card, their maritime certificate is ring-fenced.*
2. Identify the seafarer with photographic ID.
3. Write their name and DoB on the certificate.
4. Determine the reason for the examination (2 yearly renewal of medical certificate, return after illness, or follow-up for continuing health).

Medical Examination

5. Discuss / cover medical history - Past and current illnesses, diseases, surgery, conditions, injuries and medication.
6. Ask about the seafarer's duties, including in emergencies, working conditions and distance working from shore.
7. Assess the physical abilities required [see Table 1, page 2 in the guidance for more information].

Working on a ship requires: adjusting to the ship moving all the time (rolling, pitching etc.); living and working in the limited spaces of the ship and keeping watch at varying times of day and night.
8. Test against vision standards – different standards for Deck and Engineering certificates (see below for details) 9.1 or 9.2.

Medical Examination (continued)

9.1 Deck certificate vision standards	9.2 Engineering certificate vision standards
Distance vision of 6/12 in each eye IF seafarer has only one good eye AND the medical certificate is for a “Ring fenced” certificate, “monocular standard” can apply [refer to Appendix 2 in the guidance].	Distance vision of 6/15 - combined (ie using both eyes).
Near/Intermediate vision sufficient for ship’s navigation (e.g. reading charts and navigational instruments).	Near/Intermediate vision sufficient for reading instruments close up and operating equipment.
Pass colour vision test - standard 38 plate Ishihara test with two errors allowed. If the seafarer fails this test a medical certificate can still be issued - category B with a restriction such as “exercise of privileges to daylight hours only” (see below).	Has sufficient visual fields for tasks.
Has normal visual fields.	Has vision to perform all necessary functions in darkness without compromise.
Has vision to perform all necessary functions in darkness without compromise.	No significant evidence of double vision.
No significant evidence of double vision.	

If you have any doubts about eyesight or colour vision test results, the examinee must be referred to a registered optometrist.

9. Look for evidence of serious or progressive eye disease.

10. Record pass (Y/N) for all vision standards on certificate.

If a seafarer fails any eyesight standard (other than colour vision), the medical category must be recorded as C, D or E (see below).

11. Note on certificate if the seafarer has monocular vision and whether corrective lenses were used. Corrective lenses can be used to meet distance and near vision standards.

12. Test for satisfactory hearing

There is no quantitative standard for this test. It is recommended that those undertaking national deck certificates are able to hear whispered speech at a distance of 3 metres. (See full guidance for details – paragraph 10, section h)

Medical Examination (continued)

Assign a medical category – one of six- based on the information from the medical examination

13. Assess their ability to be safe and any effects on others - see prompt questions in paragraph 3 in the guidance.
14. Write the assigned category on the certificate. If you conclude a seafarer should not risk being too far from land, assign Category B and note restrictions on the certificate.

Category **C**, **D** and **E** certificates show the seafarer is not fit for work. For further information on categories please refer to Table 4, page 4 of *Guidance for medical fitness – National or Ring-fenced seafarers.*

Category A Unrestricted sea service	Category C Temporarily unfit for sea service
Category A (T) Unrestricted sea service (temporary)	Category D Indefinitely unfit for sea service
Category B Restricted sea service only – <i>state restrictions – see below</i>	Category E Permanently unfit for sea service

15. If you give category **B**, **C**, **D**, or **E**, please inform the seafarer of their right of re-examination. *Seafarers* can apply for re-examination by emailing seafarers@maritimenz.govt.nz

Category B – writing restrictions: examples and guidance (if required)

16. IF assigning category B, use the examples below and the guidance to write practical restrictions or conditions. If the necessary restriction means the seafarer would not be able to be away from land and assistance, then the category used should be C, D or E.

Objective	Examples of restrictions/conditions
Geographic limit	Distance from shore - “Stay within 50 nautical miles (NM) of land”. Note, although weather and other factors are relevant, helicopter aid is likely to be less than 6 hours away (i.e. less than 50 NM from land.) Area of operation – e.g. “Operate within the Hauraki Gulf only”.
Needing support/aids	“Must wear prescribed hearing aids” “Must take XX medication”. [insert details]
Limits on activities	“Maximum working hours to be no more than XX without a break” “No lifting loads over XX kg”. [insert details]
Colour blindness (deck certificates only)	“Exercise of privileges in daylight hours only”

Avoid restrictions too hard to implement, such as:

“must not be left alone” – impractical on a ship

“must not go to sea in rough weather” – the weather cannot be controlled.

Category C or D

17. IF C or D, write on the certificate the number of weeks or months before the seafarer can be re-examined. C = weeks (temporarily unfit). D = months (indefinitely unfit).

Date of expiry/ certificate validity

18. IF category A and B, certificates, expiry is 2 years from date of examination (**1 year** for seafarers aged **under 18**).
19. If A(T), the expiry date must match the date of the next examination.
Category C, D, or E certificates do not have an expiry date.

Last steps

20. Check the date of examination is written on the certificate.
21. Sign certificate – you as GP and the seafarer.
22. Give original certificate to seafarer (copy for your records).
23. IF the seafarer has a national maritime certificate, send a copy of this certificate to medicals@maritimenz.govt.nz (this is not a requirement for ring-fenced certificates).