

***U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC) and
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Update
Revised - July 16, 2009***

In the last few years, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) licensing process has gone through substantial changes. These changes are expected to continue as the newly-centralized National Maritime Center (NMC) develops new policies and implements ongoing domestic and international regulatory changes. *Note: this list is not all-inclusive. Therefore, mariners are highly encouraged to review the websites listed below prior to the start of an original, upgrade, or renewal process.*

Important Websites:

Following are a few websites that may prove helpful:

- ❖ **U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC):** <http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/>
- ❖ **Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC):** <http://www.tsa.gov/twic>
- ❖ **Merchant Mariner Credential Verification System(MMVC):**
<http://homeport.uscg.mil/mmcv>

U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC) Help Center:

In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC) offers assistance via a Help Center. The Help Center can be contacted toll-free at (888) I-ASK-NMC or (888) 427-5662. *Note: the toll-free telephone line is for domestic calls only.* The Help Center may also be contacted via e-mail at iasknmc@uscg.mil.

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Newsletters and Bulletins:

Mariners may also sign-up to receive newsletters and bulletins relating to the Mariner Licensing and Documentation Program. To apply for this service, please visit <http://cgls.uscg.mil/groups.php?ID=10> and choose from the following categories:

- ❖ National Maritime Center Updates.
- ❖ NMC Performance Reports.
- ❖ Mariner Licensing and Documentation (MLD) Policy Updates.
- ❖ Regional Examination Center (REC) News/Announcements.
- ❖ Mariner Information/News.
- ❖ Coast Guard Approved Courses.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Web Broadcast on the Vessel General Permit:

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Program requires all vessels to obtain a Vessel General Permit (VGP) that covers overboard discharges. For further information, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has scheduled an audio web broadcast on July 27, 2009 from 1300 to 1500 - Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). Interested individuals must register in advance via the following website: www.epa.gov/npdes/training.

Environmental Regulations Course:

MITAGS and PMI are currently offering a two (2) day “**Introduction to Environmental Regulations in the Maritime Industry/EPA General Permit for Commercial Vessels**” course, which covers new regulations that were previously unregulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The next course offering at MITAGS is scheduled for July 29-30, 2009. For additional information, please visit the MITAGS website at www.mitags.org. Interested individuals may also contact MITAGS’ Admissions Department toll-free at (866) 656-5568 or via e-mail at admissions@mitags.org.

The next course convening at PMI is scheduled for September 21-22, 2009. For further information, please visit the PMI website at www.mates.org. Interested individuals may also contact Mr. Gregg Trunnell toll-free at (888) 893-7829 or via e-mail at gtrunnell@mates.org.

Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) Verification:

Effective **July 17, 2009**, the U.S. Coast Guard has launched a new service called Merchant Mariner Credential Verification (MMCV). MMCV is an electronic tool that can be used by mariners and marine employers to verify the status of a Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC). The service is delivered via the U.S. Coast Guard Homeport website at <http://homeport.uscg.mil/mmcv>. The site also provides information detailing the qualifications that are necessary to obtain the MMC.

The MMCV system also features various search functions; including the following:

- ❖ Document Search.
- ❖ Single Mariner Search.
- ❖ Multiple Mariner Search.
- ❖ Name-Based Search.

Note: the MMCV search results will only include public information. Information protected by privacy act laws/regulations will be not released.

Vessel Security Officer (VSO) Endorsement (NMC Bulletin - June 19, 2009):

As of **July 1, 2009**, mariners who sail in the capacity of Vessel Security Officer (VSO) that operate past the boundary lines must have the Vessel Security Officer (VSO) endorsement on their STCW-95 Certificate. *Note: the U.S. Coast Guard has extended the deadline to get this endorsement to September 1, 2009. However, in the meantime, you must be able to show proof of application.*

In order to receive the Vessel Security Officer (VSO) endorsement, mariners must successfully complete a “certified” Vessel Security Officer course. To see if the course you attended is certified, please review the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC) Course Approval List. If the course is not on the “approved” list, you will need to take a Vessel Security Officer (VSO) Refresher course. Mariners have until **July 1, 2011** to successfully complete the refresher course. However, they are not permitted to sail as VSO and operate past the boundary lines unless they have this endorsement.

Posting of Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) – (NMC Bulletin - No Date):

The current statute in 46 USC 7110 requires that the license be display in a conspicuous place on the vessel. Posting the officer endorsement page of the new Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) will serve this purpose. However, for security reasons, mariners should not post their credentials in foreign ports.

Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) and Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC):

Effective **April 15, 2009**, the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center has discontinued issuance of the following:

- ❖ Merchant Mariner Document (MMD).
- ❖ Paper License.
- ❖ STCW-95 Certificate.

The new Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) will replace all three of the above-referenced documents. However, the existing documents are good until their renewal date. The Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) looks similar to a passport and includes all of the necessary endorsements for both domestic and international voyages. The MMC also meets the criteria for #185 from the General Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which is for an international seafarer's identity document.

Related to the Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) is the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC). All U.S. mariners must possess a valid Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) and a Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC). *Note: mariners may not sail with their license/Merchant Mariner Document (MMD) unless they have a valid Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC).*

Tips to Speed-Up the License Renewal Process:

Following are a few tips that should help speed-up the license renewal process:

- ❖ Start the process six (6) months prior to when you will need the license.
- ❖ Always use the latest applications, medical forms, and drug testing forms. *Note: these forms/documents are available on the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC) website.*
- ❖ Remember to download copies of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) online checklists, which will help verify that you are providing all of the necessary information.

Make sure you obtain a Department of Transportation (DOT) drug test within six (6) months of your application. Again, check the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC) website for a copy of the latest drug testing form.

- ❖ Use your "mariner reference number" whenever you correspond with the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC). This number is unique to you and will not change. Example: you need this number when you are checking the status of an application via the U.S. Coast Guard Homeport website.
- ❖ Make sure all applications/forms are completed in their entirety. Double-check that you are providing all of the necessary information. Write a cover letter to address any documents that are missing, but will be provided at a later date. Example: radar or drug test.
- ❖ Always write a cover letter with your submission that includes your complete contact information (mailing address, e-mail address, cellular telephone number, home telephone number, etc.). If you know you are going to be out to sea at a certain time, provide that information in your cover letter. If you are missing information, but will be out to sea, include how much time you will need to obtain the information.

Note: the National Maritime Center (NMC) will "kick-out" your file if they do not hear from you within ninety (90) days of their request for additional information.

- ❖ Educate your personal physician on the new medical advisory Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) #04-08, so he/she can provide the necessary information pertaining to certain medical conditions.
- ❖ Send all applications to your local Regional Examination Center (REC) via overnight or registered mail. Examples include the following:
 - U.S. Postal Service Express Mail.
 - Federal Express Overnight Service.
 - United Parcel Service (UPS) Overnight Service.
- ❖ Remember to include any fee(s). Double-check that payment is in the proper amount. Payment may be made via the following:
 - Pre-Payment using www.pay.gov.¹
 - Check.
 - Money Order.
 - Credit Card.
- ❖ Include a copy of your Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC). *Note: mariners are not required to deliver renewals in person if they possess a valid Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC).*
- ❖ Make a copy of all documents that are sent to the U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center (USCG-NMC) or your local Regional Examination Center (REC).
- ❖ Compare your new Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) to your old Merchant Mariner Document (MMD), license, and STCW-95 Certificate to ensure the MMC contains the necessary domestic and STCW endorsements.

¹ Per the U.S. Coast Guard website, www.pay.gov is the preferred method of payment.