



June 29, 2009

## Mariner Licensing and Documentation (MLD) Quarterly Credential Evaluation Report *“When should I submit my application?”*

This quarterly report provides information on credential processing time that should help you determine when to submit your credential application. This report also highlights the current processing bottlenecks and explains what the Coast Guard is doing, and what you can do, to reduce the processing time.

### *“How long does it take to process my application?”*

**Gross (Overall) Credential Processing Time:** Gross Processing Time is the time it takes for the Coast Guard **and** mariners to process an application. This time is measured from the point at which mariners submit their application to an REC to the point at which the completed credentials are mailed to the mariner. Included is time spent waiting for the mariner to submit information that may be missing from their application, and the time spent waiting for mariners to take any required exams at a Regional Exam Center (REC). Figure 1 is a Histogram that displays the total numbers of credentials issued within a given number of days for *all* credential applications issued between January 1<sup>st</sup> and June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Of note, the average gross processing time for 2009 thru June 23<sup>rd</sup> is 80 days, with a corresponding median gross processing time of 54 days. That means that 50% of the credentials issued during this period were processed in 54 days or less.

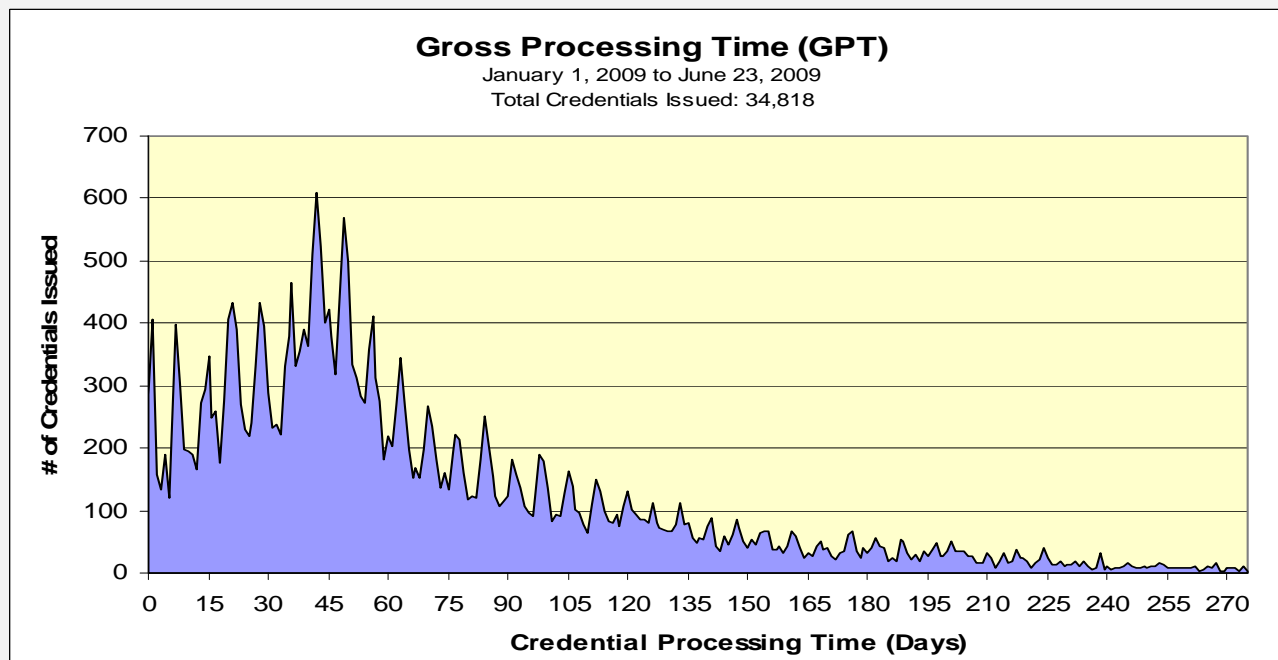
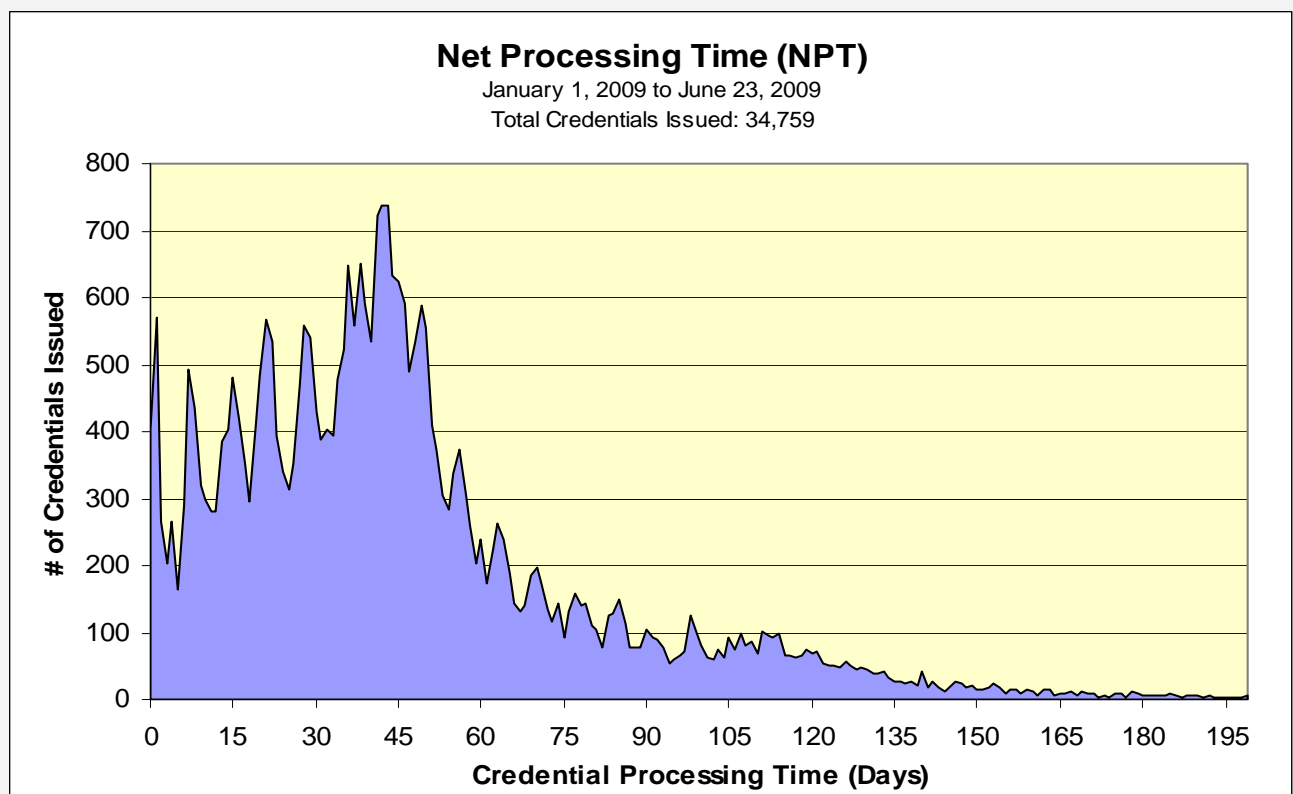


Figure 1

***“So, how long does it take the Coast Guard to process my application?”***

**Net (Coast Guard) Credential Processing Time:** Net Processing Time is the time it takes for the Coast Guard to process an application. This time is measured from the point at which the application is submitted to an REC to the point at which credentials are mailed to the mariner and excludes time spent waiting for mariner to submit missing information or take exams. This measurement factors out any time attributed to the mariner and only calculates actual Coast Guard processing time. Figure 2 is a Histogram displaying the average net processing time for *all* credentials from January 1, 2009 to June 23, 2009. From January 1<sup>st</sup> thru June 23<sup>rd</sup> - The National Maritime Center processed almost 35,000 credentials with a net processing time of 48 days. Of those 25,000 credentials, 12,000 (approximately 35%) were completed in 30 days or less.



***“What does the Coast Guard do to produce my Credential?”***

**Overall Credential Processing Time for each System State:** The NMC manages the credential production process using a series of production “states.” This enables us to administratively and physically track, and measure the time it takes, a credential application thru production to move through the various states and to identify process bottlenecks. Figure 3 illustrates the overall average percentage of time a credential spends in each state. Of note, Awaiting Information from mariner applicants and waiting for mariners Approved to Test to take required examinations constitutes 48% of the overall credentialing process time.

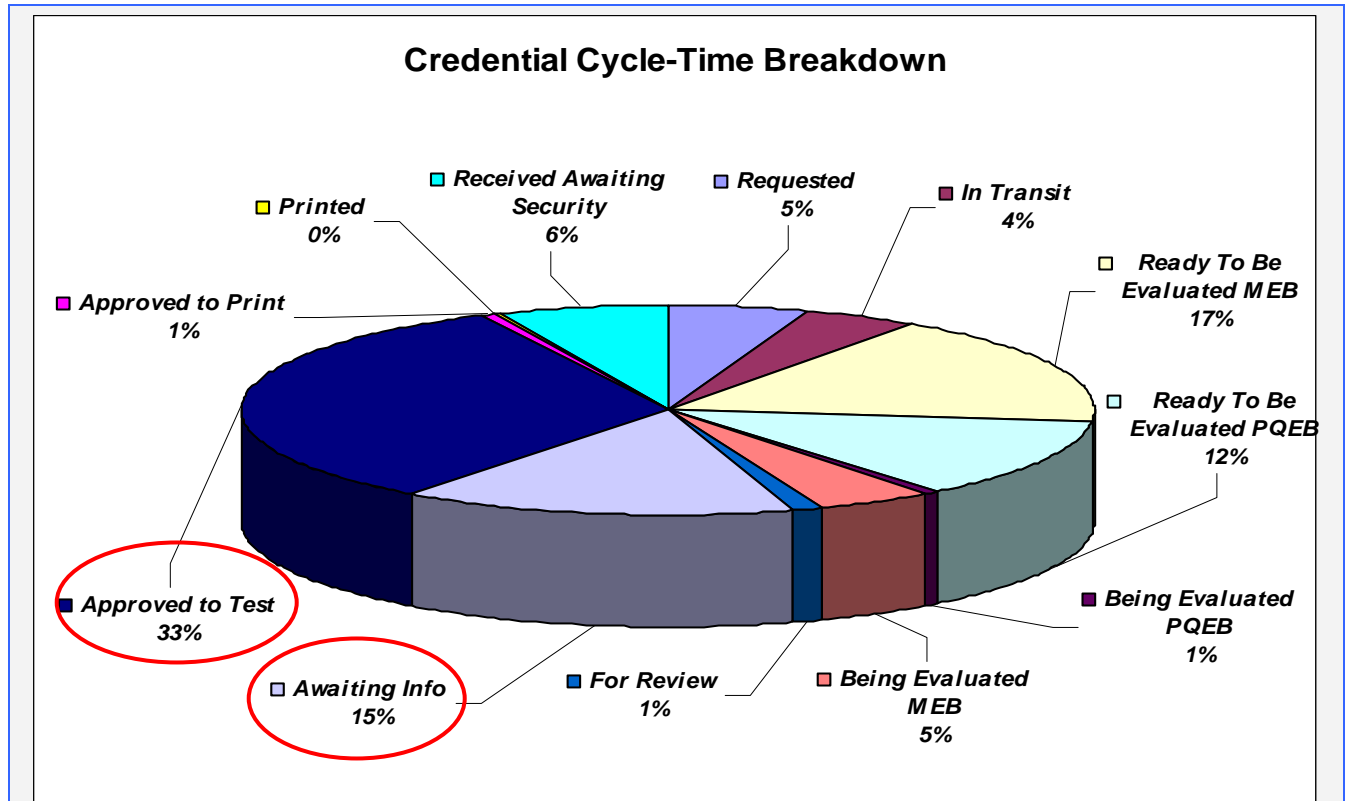


Figure 3

***What can the Mariner and the Coast Guard do to reduce processing time?***

***1. Approved to Test (33%):***

Currently, 33% of the total processing time is associated with the time it takes for mariners to complete any required exams. Many Coast Guard issued credentials require that the mariner applicant successfully pass examinations to ensure sufficient competency. Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations allows the mariner one year from the date their application is approved to complete their exams.

To reduce the processing time, the mariner can:

- Prepare for an exam by reviewing examination questions and information at <http://www.uscg.mil/nmc> under the Merchant Mariner Info Center tab.
- Make preparations to take the necessary examinations with your local Regional Examination Center (REC) as soon as you receive the approval letter from NMC.
- Take a Coast Guard approved course that will substitute for the Coast Guard exam at an REC. Lists of approved courses are available on the NMC web page at [http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/mmic\\_appcourses.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/mmic_appcourses.asp).

To reduce the processing time, the NMC continues to:

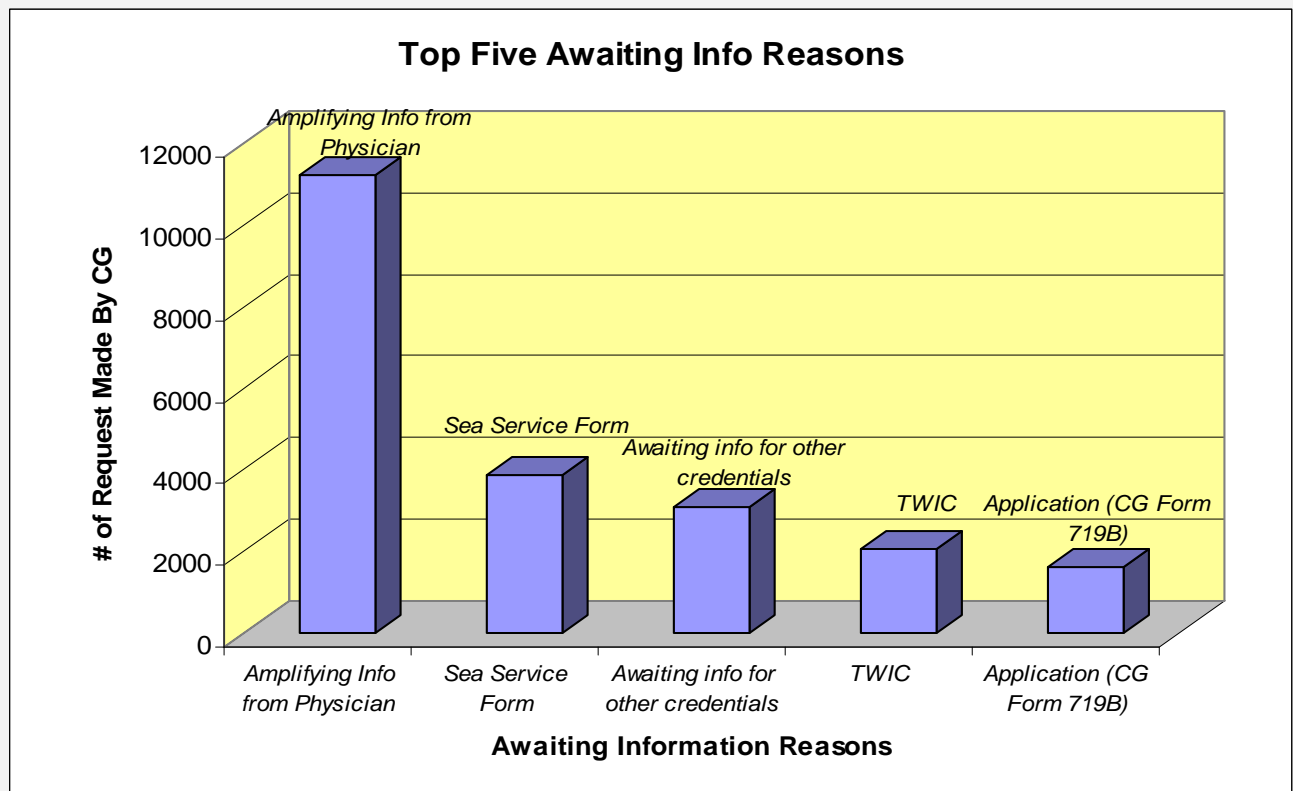
- Ensure our website has the most up to date information regarding examination requirements and REC contact information.
- Ensure the RECs are receiving the most current examination policy and guidance in order to

assist the mariners.

- Explore alternate means of administering examinations through online applications and alternate sites, all in an effort to improve accessibility.

## 2. *Awaiting Information (15%):*

Currently, 15% of the total processing time is associated with the time it takes for mariners to submit information that was missing in their application. During the processing of an application, the RECs and the NMC staff often identify the need for additional information that was not included with the application. Figure 4 displays the top five awaiting information reasons recorded thus far in 2009. The most common types of information missing from an application includes: missing medical information on the physical exam report, insufficient sea service, missing a Transportation Worker Identification Card (TWIC) and an incorrect application form (CG Form 719B).



**Figure 4**

To reduce the processing time, the mariner can:

- Ensure they have sufficient sea service for the credential they are applying for. Applications with insufficient sea service represent the largest source of processing delays.
- Mariners with specific medical conditions or those taking certain medications should consult with their medical providers and refer to the new guidance contained in the Medical and Physical Evaluation Guidelines for Merchant Mariner Credentials (NVIC 04-08, with particular attention to enclosures 3a and 3b) to ensure information submitted with your physical is complete and accurate. Mariners are encouraged to copy relevant pages from NVIC 04-08 and take these to your doctor for assistance in obtaining the needed medical information. This will avoid delays with the medical evaluation. This NVIC can be found

on our web site at the following link:

[http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/Whats\\_new\\_to\\_NMC/Medical\\_NVIC\\_Info\\_Bulletin\\_091508.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/Whats_new_to_NMC/Medical_NVIC_Info_Bulletin_091508.pdf)

- Ensure their application package is complete prior to initial submission by carefully reviewing the application requirements, which are available on our web site at the following link; [http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/Whats\\_new\\_to\\_NMC/MLD-FM-NMC1-08\\_App\\_Acceptance\\_Checklist.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/Whats_new_to_NMC/MLD-FM-NMC1-08_App_Acceptance_Checklist.pdf).
- Ask Questions – Contact their local REC or the NMC’s call center at 1-888-I ASK NMC (1-888-427-5662) or by e-mail [IASKNMC@uscg.mil](mailto:IASKNMC@uscg.mil) with specific questions regarding credentialing requirements.
- Ensure they have applied for a TWIC and placed a copy of their application receipt or a copy of their TWIC card in the application package. Mariner applications not containing an approved TWIC cannot be processed.

To reduce the processing time, the NMC is:

- Simplifying the application process by revising the application forms, developing electronic applications, and providing assistance to the mariners at the RECs.
- Developing user-friendly on-line tools to assisting mariners with determining the sea service requirements.
- Making courtesy reminder contacts with mariners via correspondence, telephone, and e-mail regarding outstanding information requests.
- Constantly tracking and communicating the top reasons credential requests are delayed due to missing and/or incomplete information.
- Exploring alternate means of communicating with mariners such as system generated alert e-mails and text messages.

### **3. Ready to be Evaluated (29%) - PQEB (12%), MEB (17%):**

Currently, 29% of the average total processing time for a credential is awaiting evaluation: 12% awaiting assignment to a Professional Qualifications evaluator, while another 17% is attributable to credentials awaiting assignment to a Medical evaluator. At these points in the process the application submitted is completely controlled by the Coast Guard. We are responsible for ensuring that credentials in these states do not sit idle and are moved on to the next step as quickly as possible.

To reduce the processing time, the NMC continues to:

- Utilizing PQEB focus work-groups to identify process redundancies, duplicate data entry and steps that can be eliminated or shifted to other groups in an effort to reduce processing time.
- Triaging physical examination reports through a series of screening processes. These new processes ensure that only mariners with serious medical conditions are forwarded to the medical evaluation professionals, allowing for a significant percentage of others to be addressed at a lower level or bypassed altogether.
- Increasing the size of both the professional qualifications and the medical evaluation staffs to ensure sufficient capacity to conduct thorough yet timely evaluations of professional qualifications and physical exam reports.

*Next MLD Quarterly Credential Evaluation Report: September 2009*