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## Actions to Reduce Mariner Credentialing Process Time

Over the past 6 months, the National Maritime Center (NMC), the Coast Guard's new centralized mariner credentialing processing facility in Martinsburg, West Virginia, has issued over 36,000 credentials, with 18,000 of those credentials issued in less than 30 days. Unfortunately, the NMC's average processing time of 80 days is not acceptable to the Coast Guard. While a significant portion of delays in processing is attributable to the complexity of completing the application, delay for 16 percent of the mariners' applications is primarily the result of production bottlenecks in the medical evaluation stage of the credential evaluation process. These delays are attributable to insufficient capacity at the NMC medical evaluations branch and the Coast Guard is taking the following actions to immediately remedy the problem and ensure it does not occur again in the future.

**Immediate Process Changes:** NMC has recently implemented enhanced risk-based screening procedures to streamline the medical evaluation process and is prioritizing all credential renewals in inventory to focus on current credentials that have expired or are near expiration. This process is specifically designed to increase the throughput of credentials and keep working mariners employed. Thousands of credentials have been produced and mailed to mariners as a result of these changes.

**Surging Resources Aggressively:** The Coast Guard is surging a full range of national resources to assist with medical screenings and evaluations including: Coast Guard active duty medical staff from around the country; Public Health Service personnel; and, medically trained Coast Guard Auxiliary members. NMC has also increased the medical staffing contract in our medical evaluations branch to provide additional capacity.

**Building Long Term Capabilities:** The Coast Guard is taking measures to expand the size of the medical evaluation branch to ensure long-term capacity to meet the medical evaluation demand and ensure efficient processing. The Coast Guard is also looking to enhance the credentialing database to enable electronic workflow to improve both the efficiency and quality of the screening and evaluation process.

**Maritime Industry Outreach:** The Coast Guard is aggressively communicating its action plans to industry leaders, marine employers, individual mariners and the public via the NMC Call Center, NMC website and the Coast Guard list server. Moreover, NMC is providing its Regional Examination Centers (REC) with clearer medical guidelines so they may better serve the mariners in completing their applications and avoiding generally preventable delays.

Sincerely,

David C. Stalfort  
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard