



June 29, 2009

Actions to Reduce Mariner Credentialing Process Time

Since January 2009, the National Maritime Center (NMC), the Coast Guard's new centralized mariner credentialing processing facility in Martinsburg, West Virginia, has issued over 34,600 credentials, with 12,000 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, other delays are the result production bottlenecks in the professional qualification stage of the credential evaluation process. These delays are attributable to the introduction of an entirely new type of passport-style consolidated mariner credential, the installation of new software used to produce the new credential and the surge of applications being submitted by merchant mariners. 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 to Expedite Mariner Applications: NMC has implemented new processing procedures to expedite applications for mariners at risk of having their current credentials expiring. Additionally, streamlined processing procedures have been established for entry level applicants, including summer hires.

Immediate Software Changes: The Coast Guard is updating the software used to evaluate mariner applications and produce the consolidated credentials. The Coast Guard is also increasing the information technology network capability at the NMC.

Surging Resources Aggressively: The NMC is surging additional resources to assist in conducting professional qualification evaluations. The additional resources will provide the necessary additional capacity to reduce the delays as quickly as possible.

Building Long Term Capabilities: The Coast Guard is taking measures to streamline the entire mariner credentialing program by building capabilities for electronic submission and processing of credential applications.

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 clear guidance to assist mariners in completing their applications and avoiding generally preventable delays.

Sincerely,

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