

Merchant Marine Circular

Panama Maritime Authority
General Directorate of Merchant Marine
Control and Compliance Department

MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-264

- To:** Parties, Administrations, Port State Supervisory Authorities, Ship-owners / Operators, Recognized Organizations (ROs), Company Security Officers, Seafarers, Legal Representatives, Authorized Maritime Training Centers, Authorized Physicians, Private Consulates of Merchant Marine, Inspectorates, Authorized Offices, Brokers, and users of the Panama Ship Registry.
- Subject:** On-board complaints procedure - Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006, as amended).
- Reference:** MLC, 2006, as amended, Law No. 2 of January 6, 2009 and Executive Decree No. 86 of February 22, 2013 and its modifications.
Circular No. DGGM-043 (**Only Recommendation**).
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1. Purpose

- 1.1.** The purpose of this Circular is to communicate to the users of the Panamanian Registry that as per the on-board complaints procedure established in the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006, as amended), all Panamanian ships must keep on board the procedure for the fair, effective and expeditious handling of seafarer complaints alleging breaches to the provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006, as amended), including seafarers' rights, and also a copy shall be kept in English or the language spoken on board.

2. Scope:

- 2.1.** This Merchant Marine Circular applies to all seafarers, ship-owners, operators, and companies under the provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006, as amended).
- 3.** Seafarers may use the on-board complaints procedures to lodge complaints related to any matter that is alleged to constitute a breach of the provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006, as amended).
- 4.** Each vessel or company shall develop the on-board complaints procedures for the processing of complaints on-board.

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5. Seafarers have the right to present their complaints directly to the master and, if necessary, to the competent alien authorities, understanding as these, the Port State Control or Flag State inspectors.
6. The on-board complaints procedures shall include the right of seafarers to be accompanied or represented during the procedure for the processing of complaints, as well as to be protected against the possibility of harassment of seafarers for filing complaints. The term "harassment" covers any adverse action taken by any person with respect to a seafarer for lodging a complaint which is not manifestly abusive or maliciously made.
7. Every Panamanian flagged vessel shall provide seafarers with a copy of the on-board complaints procedure applicable, along with a copy of their employment agreement. The on-board complaints procedure shall include the competent authority contact information in the Flag State and the seafarers' country of residence, if different from the State; as well as the name of one or more persons on board the ship who can, on a confidential basis, provide seafarers with impartial advice on their complaints and also assistance regarding the procedure for the processing of complaints available on board the ship.
8. The process of on-board complaints begins when seafarers first refer to the head of the department where he or she works or to the seafarer's superior officer. It shall be the responsibility of the head of the department or superior officer, as the case may be, attempting to resolve the matter within prescribed time limits on board the ship, which shall not exceed five (5) days.
9. If the head of the department or superior officer cannot resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the seafarer, the latter may refer it to the master, who should handle the matter personally; seafarers should at all times have the right to be accompanied by another seafarer of their choice on board the ship concerned.
10. The vessel shall keep on board a record book for complaints, were all of these as well as the decisions made related to the same, should be recorded. Also a copy of this shall be provided to the seafarer; if a complaint cannot be resolved on board, the matter should be referred ashore to the ship-owner, who will have a period of eight (8) days, to resolve the matter, in consultation with the concerned seafarer or any person they may appoint as their representative; and in all cases, seafarers shall have the right to submit the complaint directly to the master and the ship-owner, as well as to the competent authorities, being understood as such the Flag State inspectors, Port State Control inspectors, representatives of the Competent Authority in a foreign country or directly to the offices of the Maritime Labour Affairs Department of the General Directorate of Seafarers of the Panama Maritime Authority.

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11. If within the eight (8) days period, mentioned in the paragraph 9, the complaint has not been resolved, then the period shall be extended for twenty two (22) more additional days, with the sole purpose to find a favorable solution, which shall be recorded on the registries of the ship and be available to the competent authorities.
12. Any kind of harassment against seafarers filing complaints is banned.
13. Seafarers may directly file their complaints by sending the Complaints Handling Form to the Maritime Labour Affairs Department at the following e-mail: labormar@amp.gob.pa.
 - 13.1. [The Complaints Handling Form](#).
14. The Maritime Labour Affairs Department of the General Directorate of Seafarers maintains the following contact points:
 - 14.1. E-mail: labormar@amp.gob.pa.
 - 14.2. Telephone numbers: (+507) 501-5059/5060

October, 2023 – Change subject, the paragraphs # 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 are modified and the paragraph # 14 is added.

May, 2019 – Change of Annex Complaint Form (F-30 ALM V.02).

August, 2016 - Annex Complaint Form (F-ALM-01-01).

August, 2015 - Change of email address on points 12 and 13

September, 2014 – Change of email address on points 12 and 13

December, 2013 - Modification of point 12 and 13

May, 2013 – Modification of point 9 and addition of new point 12.

February, 2013 – Addition of second paragraph in point 9.

January, 2013.

Inquiries concerning the subject of this Merchant Marine Circular or any other request should be forward to:

Maritime Labour Affairs Department
General Directorate of Seafarers
General Directorate of Merchant Marine
Panama Maritime Authority

Phone: (507) 501-5059 / 5060 / 5066 / 5067

E-mail: labormar@amp.gob.pa

Website: <https://panamashipregistry.com/circulars/>