

Merchant Marine Circular

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

MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-275

- 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:** Food and catering - Regulation 3.2, Standard A3.2 of the 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-045 (**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, the provisions applicable to food and catering in accordance with Regulation 3.2, Standard A3.2 of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006, as amended).

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. Every ship shall provide, free of charge, to seafarers during their period on board or period of engagement, drinking water and food of appropriate quality, variety, nutritional value and quantity that adequately covers the requirements of seafarers, taking into account their different cultural and religious backgrounds, as well as the duration and nature of the voyage.

4. The organization and equipment of the catering service of the ship shall allow the provision to seafarers of adequate, varied, balanced and nutritious meals prepared and served in hygienic conditions. In regards to hygiene of food and water, the provisions contained in Chapter 29 of the International Medical Guide for Ships, 3rd Edition or its subsequent versions shall be taken into account.



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5. Ship-owners shall ensure that seafarers employed as ship's cooks are trained and qualified for their position on board ships, for which, completion of the training course recognized by the Panama Maritime Authority is required, which covers practical cookery, food and personal hygiene, food storage, stock control, and environmental protection and catering health and safety. The PMA will recognize the training courses in the follow cases:
 - 5.1. When the training course certificate of ship's cook has been issued by a maritime training center duly authorized by the PMA.
 - 5.2. When the training course certificate of ship's cook has been issued by a Competent Administration who has ratified the MLC, 2006, as amended and the certificate expresses thoroughly that the course has been imparted according the Regulation 3.2, Standard A3.2, paragraph 4 of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006, as amended).
 - 5.3. When the training course certificate of ship's cook has been issued by a Competent Administration who has ratified the ILO Certification of Ships' Cooks Convention, 1946 (No. 69) and the certificate expresses thoroughly that the course has been imparted according the ILO Certification of Ships' Cooks Convention, 1946 (No. 69).
6. On ships operating with a prescribed manning of less than ten (10) crew members, it may not be required to carry a fully qualified cook, however, anyone processing food in the galley shall be trained or instructed in areas including food and personal hygiene as well as handling and storage of food on board ship, in accordance with the ***Instructions for Handling, Storage and Preparation of Food***, approved by the PMA.
7. In accordance with the provisions of MLC, 2006, as amended, a seafarer shall be considered as qualified to opt for seaman's book accrediting him as ship's cook on board Panamanian flag ships, only if the minimum requirements established by the PMA are met. The requirements for seaman's book are available in following link on the PMA website:
 - 7.1. [Requirements for Certificates of Competency, Seaman's Books, Certificates of Proficiency and Certificates of Course Endorsement - Ratings.](#)
8. Ships are required to maintain on board the technical documentation for seafarers issued by the PMA attesting the satisfactory training and qualifications of the ship's cook or cooks serving on board.



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9. The PMA, in circumstances of exceptional necessity, may issue a dispensation permitting a non-fully qualified cook to serve in a specified ship for a specified limited period, until the next convenient port of call or for a period not exceeding one month, provided that the person to whom the dispensation is issued is trained or instructed in areas including food and personal hygiene as well as handling and storage of food on board ship, applying the ***Instructions for Handling, Storage and Preparation of Food***, and approved by the PMA.
10. To request for Dispensation for Ship's Cook under Regulation 3.2, Standard A3.2, paragraph 6 of the MLC, 2006, as amended, the company must follow the procedure established in **MMC-385**.
11. The master or person under the authority of the master shall frequently perform documented inspections on board the ship, and the date and results of each inspection shall be recorded in the Master's official logbook and be available for review. These inspections shall cover the concerning to:
 - 11.1. Supplies of food and drinking water in relation to their quantity, nutritional value, quality and variety;
 - 11.2. All spaces and equipment used for the storage and handling of food and drinking water; and
 - 11.3. Galley and other equipment for the preparation and service of meals.
12. The Instructions for Handling, Storage and Preparation of Food approved by the PMA, is available in the following link:
 - 12.1. [Instructions for Handling, Storage and Preparation of Food](#).

October, 2023 – The paragraphs # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 are modified, and the paragraphs # 11, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 12 and 12.1 are added.

May, 2019 – Modification of point 6 and 10

February, 2019 – Elimination of points 6, 7 and 12; modification of point 8

January, 2016 – Modification of point 4

September, 2014 – Change of email address on email below

February, 2014 – Modification of point 4

October, 2013 – New point 12

September, 2013 – Modification of point 4

July, 2013 – Changes all throughout the text of the Circular

June, 2013.



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

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