



# Marine Safety Information Bulletin

Commandant  
U.S. Coast Guard  
Inspections and Compliance Directorate  
2703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE, STOP 7501

MSIB Number: 04-21  
Date: March 17, 2021  
E-Mail: [COVID-19crewchange@uscg.mil](mailto:COVID-19crewchange@uscg.mil)  
Washington, DC 20593-7501

---

## COVID-19 Crew Change Issues

The COVID-19 pandemic has significant impacts on the U.S. Marine Transportation System, the Global shipping industry and on seafarers themselves. Travel restrictions imposed by governments around the world have created significant hurdles to crew changes and repatriation of seafarers. The physical and mental fatigue of seafarers who are unable to leave the vessel at the end of their contracts has led to growing humanitarian concerns as well as concerns for the safety of seafarers and shipping. On January 25, 2021, the U.S. joined 53 other International Maritime Organization (IMO) member states in [Circular Letter No.4204/Add.35/Rev.3](#) in pledging to facilitate crew changes and achieve key worker designation for seafarers.

Multiple federal agencies share responsibility for evaluating requests for crew change and shore access for foreign mariners. As such, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) provides the following guidance for U.S. mariners who may be experiencing crew change issues abroad and for foreign mariners who may be experiencing crew change issues while in the U.S.

### U.S. Mariners Abroad

U.S. mariners who are attempting to conduct a crew change abroad should first consult the host nation's COVID-19 guidelines for travel to determine what intermediary steps are required in order to depart from or arrive to the country. If all steps have been completed or otherwise satisfied, but a U.S. mariner is still unable to depart or arrive for a crew change, an email may be sent to the USCG at [COVID-19crewchange@uscg.mil](mailto:COVID-19crewchange@uscg.mil). U.S. mariner crew change concerns will require coordination with the Department of State. The Department of State provides country specific information on U.S. Embassy COVID pages for updates on the impact of COVID-19 worldwide at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/COVID-19-Country-Specific-Information.html>

### International Mariners in the U.S.

The U.S. supports the IMO initiative to facilitate crew change and shore access for foreign mariners. The IMO has established a number of support mechanisms including [Frequently Asked Questions](#) regarding repatriation as well as a [Seafarer Crisis Action Team](#). These resources outline actions the mariner, companies and nations can take to support crew changes. If a foreign mariner has expended all resources available through the IMO, the USCG may be contacted at [COVID-19crewchange@uscg.mil](mailto:COVID-19crewchange@uscg.mil). It should be noted that all foreign mariner requests for repatriation will require U.S. Customs and Border Protection approval.

Questions concerning this notice may be forwarded to Coast Guard Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance, at [COVID-19crewchange@uscg.mil](mailto:COVID-19crewchange@uscg.mil). This is a shared email box that is not continuously monitored and should not be used for emergencies.