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Oasis Circular No.: 2013

Date: Nov 10, 2020

**Subject: Foreign Crew Change Procedures at Qingdao, Tianjin, Dalian and Shanghai**

Following the notice regarding the Chinese authorities' agreement to allow 10 ports (i.e. Dalian, Tianjin, Qingdao, Shanghai, Ningbo, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Haikou) to resume foreign crew change operations under strict COVID-19 prevention and control mechanism, the concerned ports are gradually putting in place their own detailed measures to facilitate implementation of the notice. So far, the ports of Shanghai, Qingdao, Tianjin and Dalian have established their specific measures. Please find below the relevant information for your reference:

**1. Qingdao port**

**1.1 Landing application of foreign crew**

1.1.1 For foreign crew members who need to stay in Qingdao port for a long period of time due to ship repair or other reasons, 14 days' stay in port is required for landing application, during which the maritime authorities will verify the information (including ship name, ship registration, crew member's name, nationality, gender, age, health condition, history of residence abroad, the ship's last port call and crew member's last shift change, etc.). The ship owner or the ship's agent should report the relevant information about the ship's crew (as above) to the customs, immigration and maritime authorities three days in advance, and report any subsequent changes immediately.

1.1.2 Measures for foreign seafarers holding visa-exempt seafarer's certificates. For Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Polish or foreign seafarers whose country have visa exemption agreements with China, or those who have entry and exit documents within the scope of the visa exemption agreements with China, they should meet the

requirement of leaving the previous port for more than 14 days, and the maritime authorities will verify the information. The ship owner or the ship's agent shall report the relevant information about the ship's crew to the customs, immigration and maritime departments three days in advance, and report any changes immediately.

1.1.3 Foreign crew members who apply for landing should submit a written application to the local epidemic prevention headquarters, customs, maritime authorities and immigration authorities through the ship's owner or the ship's agent, and truthfully report the need for rest, the specific itinerary during the landing period and the health condition of all crew members on board. If the health record of the crew members shows normal, and there is no abnormality in customs quarantine after arrival, and all the crew members have two negative nucleic acid tests, first test on the day of landing and second test three days later. Furthermore, serum antibody test will also be conducted on the third day of landing. The local epidemic prevention headquarters shall seek the opinions of customs, maritime and immigration authorities before granting approval and formulating tailor-made measures for each ship. After the customs and immigration office have gone through the relevant examination and approval procedures, the crew member can leave the ship and enter the country for rest, and the local epidemic prevention headquarters will provide designated hotel accommodation services.

## **1.2 Foreign crew change operation**

1.2.1 For those crew members who need to leave Qingdao port upon the expiration or termination of their contracts or for humanitarian reasons, they should meet the requirement of having left the previous port for more than 14 days. The maritime authorities will verify the information. The ship owner or the ship's agent shall report the relevant information about the ship's crew to the customs, immigration and maritime authorities three days in advance, and report any changes immediately.

1.2.2 Departure requirements: Foreign crew members who apply for off-signing and obtain permission should take a flight departing China directly from Qingdao, and after the relevant examination and approval procedures, they will be sent to the airport point-to-point by the local epidemic prevention headquarters. The crew members who cannot leave on the same day by plane will be sent to the quarantine hotel point-to-point by the headquarters, and then sent to the airport point-to-point to leave when the flight is available; for those who can leave by other ships at Qingdao port, the headquarters will send them to the terminal for boarding.

1.2.3 For the joining crew, the ship or the ship's agent shall submit a written application to the local epidemic prevention headquarters and upon their approval, the municipal foreign affairs office shall report to the provincial foreign affairs office for issuance of a visa invitation letter.

## 2. Tianjin port

Crew members who apply for landing for different reasons should comply with different requirements, which are listed below:

2.1 In the event of sudden illness which is life threatening, humanitarian assistance will be arranged for foreign seafarers, where:

(1) The crew member shall be transported to the designated hospital by ambulance.

(2) The cured crew member shall be transported to the outbound airport by private car point-to-point, and no domestic airport transfers are allowed. Alternatively, he or she can board other ships at Tianjin port and leave the country. The vehicles engaging in the point-to-point transportation should return to Tianjin from the outbound airport on the same day, so basically the furthest the crew can go is to the airport in Beijing, but not Shanghai or Guangzhou.

2.2 Long-staying foreign crew members who have been on ships undergoing repairs in China for a long period of time can apply for landing breaks. The applicant must have been in the country for more than 14 days.

2.3 Foreign seafarers with seafarers' certificates and mutual visa exemption agreements may land and take rest if their stay has exceeded 14 days.

2.4 For crew members who plan to disembark in Tianjin for off-signing and humanitarian disembarkation (e.g. family bereavement), the following conditions must be met:

(1) 14 days after sailing from the last overseas port,

(2) 14 days quarantine health record of the crew signed by the ship agent,

(3) outbound air ticket of the same city (directly departing from Tianjin airport),

(4) point-to-point transfer by special vehicles arranged by the Epidemic Prevention and Control Headquarters,

(5) the crew member should leave the country right after disembarkation without delay.

(6) If there is a large gap between the departure time from the ship and the flight time, whether the crew can enter and stay in a quarantine hotel to wait for the flight shall be decided by the Epidemic Prevention and Control Headquarters on a case by case basis.

2.5 Joining crew members who enter the port of Tianjin to board a vessel must meet the following conditions.

- (1) holding an invitation letter issued by the authority upon application by the ship agent,
- (2) holding negative nucleic acid test report before coming to China
- (3) normal health declaration record for the 14 days before entry.
- (4) the crew member must be quarantined for 14 days before they can leave the quarantine hotel.
- (5) The place of entry must be Tianjin Airport, not from Beijing or Shanghai Airport.

2.6 Change of foreign crew on board engineering vessels: refer to D&E above.

2.7 All costs should be borne by the crew member and a circuit-breaker mechanism will be applied, i.e., in case an aggregate of five crewmembers employed by the same shipping company are found positive to NAT tests, the shipping company's foreign crew change operation shall be suspended for 15 days; in case an aggregate of 10 crew members are found positive to NAT tests, the shipping company's foreign crew change operation shall be suspended for 30 days; once the aggregate of crew members who are tested positive exceeds 10, the shipping company's foreign crew change shall be halted unless approval is obtained after assessment by relevant authorities.

### **3. Dalian port**

3.1 Shipping companies (including their organizations in China, agencies and ocean-going fishing companies) to which foreign seafarers belong should formulate a plan for the change of foreign seafarers, which should include the following information: the list of seafarers joining and off signing from the ship, together with their nationalities, passport numbers, inbound traffic information, time of entry, port of crew change, positions to be held, time of crew change, health condition, protective measures, next port of destination, mode of transportation to the place of crew change and outbound port, outbound flight information, destination and mode of transportation, etc.

3.2 The shipping company shall ensure that the crew members are in normal health for 14 days before the crew change, check their body temperature (at least twice a day). The health record form of the crew members boarding the ship shall be examined and stamped by the shipping company. The health record of the crew members disembarking shall be verified and signed by the captain of the ship, and the record of the captain of the ship who is off signing shall be verified and signed by the C/O or other senior crew members.

3.3 Shipping companies and ocean-going fishing companies shall urge the ships to

report the health information of the crew members on board to the maritime authorities or to the fishery authorities at least 48 hours prior to their arrival at the port. In case of abnormal health conditions, maritime authorities and competent fisheries departments shall promptly inform the other relevant authorities.

3.4 Joining foreign crew members must provide a negative nucleic acid test report issued by a qualified medical institution within 7 days before boarding the ship.

3.5 Shipping companies and agents should ensure the health protection for joining and off signing crew members. They should fill out the Health Record Registration Form for off signing crew members (with their signatures and official seals, etc.) in a standardized manner, and should not change the port of call and names of off signing crew after submitting the application. Shipping companies and agents should book in advance the departure tickets for off signing crew members, and arrange for their departure in a timely manner after the quarantine period, without unnecessary stay.

3.6 The number of a shipowner's crew members who are tested positive upon entry into China will have a direct impact on the approval of the next application. In this regard, please refer to the abovementioned circuit-breaker mechanism.

#### **4. Shanghai port**

4.1 The shipping company shall formulate crew change plan in advance for the crew who would disembark the vessel at Shanghai for repatriation due to the expiration or termination of their contracts or for humanitarian reasons only for foreign vessel which has left the previous port for more than 14 days. No crew change operation is to be arranged within 14 days between departure from the last port and arrival in China.

4.2 The crew change plan should be submitted to the municipal epidemic prevention headquarters and once the approval is obtained, the shipping company should guide the crew to do personal protection and check their body temperature (at least twice a day). The health record of the crew members disembarking shall be signed by themselves and verified/signed by the captain of the ship, and the record of the captain of the ship who is off signing shall be verified and signed by the C/O or other senior crew members.

4.3 Shipping companies and ocean-going fishing companies shall urge their ships to report the health information of the crew members on board to the maritime authorities and fishery authorities at least 48 hours prior to their arrival at the port. In case of abnormal health conditions, maritime authorities and competent fisheries authorities shall promptly inform the MSA.

4.4 In case that the quarantine outcome is normal and the NAT shows negative result, the immigration office will issue temporary entry permits for foreign crew who should leave the country right after disembarkation by car from the vessel to the airport without unnecessary delay. The vessel should not leave the port before the departure of the crew. While container ships with tight schedule or other vessels with proper reason may leave the port in advance upon the approval of the epidemic prevention headquarters. The NAT should be arranged in advance if required by the inbound country or the airlines.

4.5 For the joining crew, the ship or the ship's agent shall put forward a crew change plan in advance and submit a written application to the municipal foreign affairs office for issuance of a visa invitation letter. Shipping companies and individual crew member should keep proper personal protection and health records, and the crew should board the vessel right after entry without delay upon receiving negative result for the NAT test.

4.6 The foreign crew members who need to stay in Shanghai port for a long period of time due to ship repair or holding visa-exempt seafarer's certificates will be granted landing permission for temporary rest upon the approval of the epidemic prevention headquarters, the requirement is similar to that of Qingdao port. The crew member should leave China with his vessel after rest, and no other means of exit is permitted without approval.

Up to now, at Shanghai and Qingdao, there have already been cases of successful foreign crew disembarkation before the issuance of this circular. But there are still many difficulties in practice, mainly because foreign crews can't get visa for entry into China easily. At the moment, most of the efforts are focusing on disembarkation.

Also, the application and approval process for crew change is cumbersome where vessels have to wait for a long time when going through the approval procedures, causing non-production berthing cost unavoidably sometimes. Another issue is the unavailability of the international flights which could be flying only once a week, the circuit-breaker mentioned above, not to mention the fact that some other countries have locked down.

Undoubtedly, shipowners will consider the reasons for each crew change very carefully and we would suggest the owners contact with their local agent well in advance for full preparation. In the meantime, we shall continue to monitor the situation of other ports as well as their measures on crew change and provide updates as and when necessary.

We hope the above is of assistance. Any further query, please feel free to contact us at [\[oasis@oasispandi.com\]\(mailto:oasis@oasispandi.com\)](mailto:oasis@oasispandi.com).

Best regards,

**Oasis P&I Services Company Limited**