

# MEDICAL FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

for those working on domestic vessels and small commercial vessels

YOUR HEALTH AT SEA 6



Domestic Passenger Ships  
Inland Waterway Vessels  
Code Vessels



Maritime and Coastguard Agency

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## Introduction

There are particular risks and responsibilities associated with operating vessels whether at sea or in sheltered waters, which call for a high standard of health and fitness for all those working in the industry.

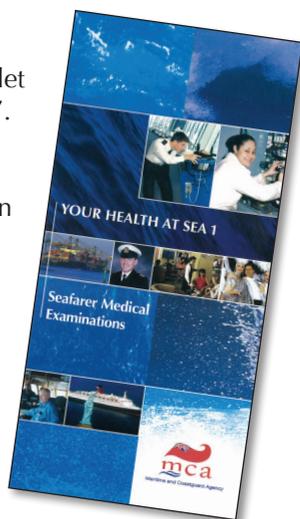
Even where the risks are perceived to be lower, in inland waters, an emergency situation may place particular demands on the master of the vessel in ensuring that they and others reach safety.

### *What the law says*

Regulations place a duty on those working on board UK ships to take care of their health and safety and to co-operate with their employers. Those working alone or with very small crews may be difficult to reach or far from assistance if they are taken ill. So while new technology to maximise efficiency and reduce risks is becoming more commonplace, it remains important that those operating vessels commercially are fully fit to carry out the full range of their duties.

Medical requirements for those holding internationally recognised certificates of competency (STCW qualifications) are laid down in MSN 1765 and the leaflet "Your Health at Sea 1 – Seafarer Medical Examinations". This leaflet covers the medical requirements for those issued with UK national qualifications for small commercial vessels, boatmasters' licences and European boatmasters' certificates issued in the UK.

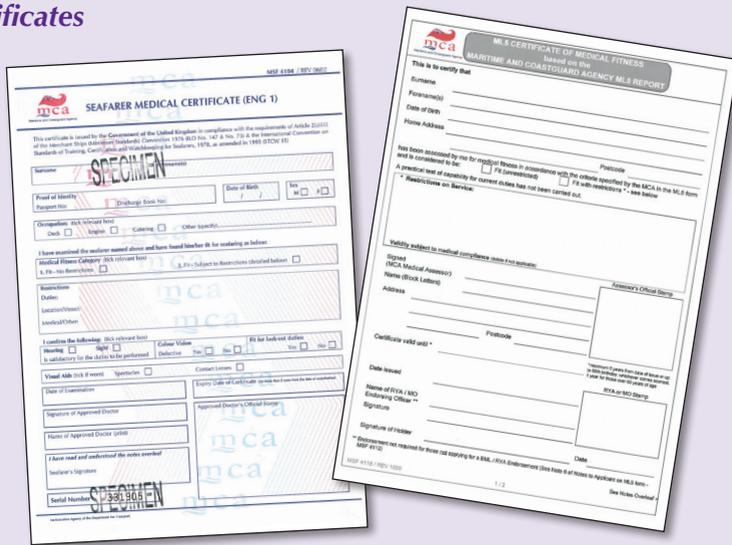
Some local authorities issue licences for limited local passenger operations (carrying no more than 12 passengers) and they will have their own requirements for medical fitness. You should consult them if you are applying for a boatman's licence.



# Who needs a medical certificate?

Regulations require anyone in charge of a vessel, other than a pleasure vessel, to be medically fit to perform their duties.

## There are two types of certificates



A **seafarer medical certificate** (known in the UK as an **ENG1**) is required by the master of:

- a domestic seagoing passenger ship, carrying more than 12 passengers (Class VI or VI A)
- a small commercial vessel certificated for Area Category 1 or 0 (more than 60 miles from a safe haven)
- This is also valid for any of the other categories described to the right, but is a more stringent standard than is legally required

An **ML5 medical report and certificate** is required by:

- the master of a passenger ship that does not go to sea (Class IV or V)
- a small commercial vessel certificated for Area Category 2 to 6 (no more than 60 miles from a safe haven)
- the master of any commercial vessel which does not go to sea
- a crew member or anyone else (eg stewards or catering staff); whose normal place of work is on board a vessel which goes to sea

## *Other crew ...*

Crew Members on seagoing vessels require a Medical Certificate.

There are **no** statutory medical requirements for other members of the crew on a **non-seagoing** vessel, although your employer may require you to have one, under their general health and safety responsibilities to ensure you are medically fit to perform the duties assigned to you.

If your usual place of work is ashore, but you need to work on a temporary, short-term or one-off basis on a vessel, and have no safety-critical responsibilities, you do not legally need a medical certificate, although, again, your employer may require you to obtain one.

## Why do I need a medical?

- To confirm that you are fit for the duties you will perform
- To find out if you have a medical condition which could lead to sudden incapacity or abnormal behaviour which could put a vessel and those on board in danger
- To find out whether you have a condition which could recur when the vessel is operating and need urgent treatment
- To check whether you have a condition which could be a danger to other crew members or passengers
- To ensure that you are fit for emergency duties

The importance of these aspects will depend on the job you do. The possibility of recurrence of illness for someone who operates a vessel alone is an issue which the doctor will need to take into account. You may be asked about your duties and the standards applied will take account of them.

## When do I need a medical?

It is a good idea to check the medical standards which apply before embarking on training or examinations, so as to avoid wasted time and expense if you are subsequently found to have a medical condition which makes you unfit for service.

You need to submit your medical certificate when you apply for or revalidate a boatmasters' licence, RYA certificate with commercial endorsement or other qualification.

Employers may ask you to show your medical certificate when you apply for work or they may include a medical as part of the recruitment process.

Port officials and marine surveyors may require you or the master to present your certificate for inspection. There may be inconvenience and legal penalties if your certificate is not valid.

**You may put yourself and others at risk if you are not medically fit to perform your duties**

*Notify the MCA if you are aware of any changes to your medical fitness during the validity of the medical certificate.*

# What are the most important conditions which may affect my fitness?

*The standards for the ENG1 are based on international guidelines (World Health Organisation/International Labour Organisation).*

The medical standards used for fitness decisions based on ML5 forms are the same as those used for the ENG 1 medical. However some which are irrelevant or less relevant to UK inland and near coastal waters are not applied. The assessment system for the ML5 is based on that used for commercial driving but with the added consideration of colour vision (for interpreting navigation lights), the effects of sudden immersion in water, and the need to assist passengers or other crew members in an emergency.

- coronary thrombosis (heart attack)
- problems with heart rhythm
- some forms of heart surgery
- diseases of the heart or arteries
- lung disease causing shortness of breath
- diabetes treated with insulin
- stroke
- unexplained loss of consciousness
- epilepsy
- severe head injury or major brain surgery
- treatment for a mental or nervous problem
- alcohol or drug addiction problems
- severe deafness or difficulty communicating by radio/telephone
- eyesight or colour vision that does not meet standards
- transplants of kidney, heart etc; joint replacements; limb prostheses
- other conditions which can lead to sudden incapacity
- other conditions which put you at increased risk of becoming ill while in charge of the vessel/remote from assistance
- conditions which limit mobility and stamina both under normal and emergency conditions
- medication which has side effects which reduce performance or alertness or which can cause complications while in charge of the vessel



# When should I renew my medical certificate?

When you first apply for a boatmasters' licence or a RYA certificate. Then;

- Every year, if you have an ENG1 and are under the age of 18
- every two years, if you have an ENG1
- every five years, if you have an ML5 and operate at sea
- every five years, if you have an ML5, after the age of 45 if you operate on inland waters
- every year after the age of 65, wherever you operate, if you have an ML5

You may also be required to have a new medical assessment at any other interval specified by the doctor

or;

if your medical health changes during the validity of your licence or certificate.



# ENG1 Medical Certificate



## Seafarer Medicals (ENG1)

An ENG1 medical examination must be carried out by an Approved Doctor, i.e. one approved by the MCA to carry out seafarer medical examinations.

**Approved Doctors** are listed annually in a Merchant Shipping Notice or a “live” list showing the latest amendments can be viewed on the MCA’s website.

**Recognised equivalents** - In addition, seafarer medical certificates from certain other countries are accepted and these are listed on the website.

Either you, or your employer may arrange an examination by making an appointment with an Approved Doctor. This needs to be done before your current certificate expires. You should keep at least two weeks in hand to arrange your appointment, to be examined, and to be issued with a certificate of fitness.

### *What to bring to your examination;*

- Photographic ID – either passport, driving licence or discharge book
- Previous medical certificate
- Name and number of GP
- Any Medicines that have been prescribed
- Glasses/contact lenses if worn including spares
- Medical reports and letters



You must tell the doctor if you have ever been issued with a Notice of Failure/Restriction form (ENG3) by an Approved Doctor or a final failure certificate (ENG7) after appeal to a medical referee. You should also tell him if you failed to complete the medical examination for any reason.

- **Fee** – If you are employed, your employer is responsible for paying the cost of the medical. There is a set maximum fee for the examination which is displayed on our website. The doctor may charge less, but cannot charge more than this for the statutory medical. You should find out how payment is being arranged if you are seeing an Approved Doctor who does not normally carry out examinations for your employer. If you are self employed or between jobs, payment is your own responsibility.
- **Additional tests** - If appropriate, the Approved Doctor may ask you to undertake certain additional tests, such as blood tests, physical fitness or audiometry tests or may arrange for you to have a chest X-ray, or immunizations. Extra fees may be charged for these extra tests. The leaflet, Your Health at Sea No 2 explains more about what may be required. The Doctor should explain this before carrying out the test, giving you the option of receiving an ENG3 or paying for the additional test.
- **Results** - At the end of the medical, the doctor will issue you with a certificate of fitness. This may either certify you as fit without restriction (“unrestricted”), fit with restrictions (e.g. limiting your work to certain jobs or localities), or make you temporarily unfit or permanently unfit.

**The ENG1 certificate is your property,  
not your employer’s and  
should be kept safe.**

## What should I do if I am unhappy about the Approved Doctor's decision?

If you are found unfit or your certificate is restricted, the Approved Doctor will give you a Notice of Failure/Restriction form which will tell you what to do if you wish to appeal against the decision.

If you want to appeal you must contact MCA Seafarer Health and Safety Branch within one month of the medical.

You will be asked to see an independent medical referee who will examine you, may request additional tests or specialist opinions, and will then decide whether the original decision on fitness was sound in terms of any diagnosis made and the application of the medical standards. As a result the referee may issue you with a revised certificate.

The cost of the appeal, including any additional reports obtained, is met by the MCA, but you will incur travel expenses.

Supplementary reports - Sometimes your GP or specialist who has treated your condition may say that they think you are fully fit. This often relates to normal onshore work and does not cover the specific fitness requirements of operating vessels. Reports from your doctor may help the referee make their decision and it is in your interests to provide any additional medical information which may help your case, but it is for the referee to assess your fitness in relation to the legal standards and their decision is final.



# ML5 Medicals



## ML5 Medicals

- **The ML5 report and certificate** form can be obtained from any MCA Marine Office or downloaded from the MCA website at [www.mcga.gov.uk](http://www.mcga.gov.uk)
- **Completing the form** – You should take the report form to your GP or any UK registered medical practitioner to complete (unless your employer has made alternative arrangements). They will probably charge a fee based on British Medical Association rates – MCA does not set this fee.
- **Issue of the certificate** – The report is designed in a question and answer format. If, having completed the report, there are no ticks in any box indicating a medical problem, or any other notes on medical conditions, the doctor may complete the certificate proforma, which you may then submit with your application for issue or revalidation of a boatmasters' licence or RYA certificate.
- **The MCA office or the Royal Yachting Association** who issue your licence or certificate will retain the report and copy of the certificate to support the application but will return the endorsed certificate to the seafarer to keep.
- **“Tick in the wrong box”** – If during the ML5 medical assessment you are found to be suffering from any of the types of conditions which may make you unfit for service, and a box on the report has to be ticked to this effect, the Doctor may not sign the certificate. The completed report and blank certificate will be returned to you.
- **Referral Process** – If you wish to pursue your application, you will need to complete Part D of the form and then take or send the form to the MCA Office or the RYA (whichever is dealing with your licence/commercial endorsement) which may arrange for the application to be reviewed by an MCA Medical Assessor. If, as a result, the Medical Assessor considers you are fit for service, they may issue an ML5 certificate, which may be subject to restrictions. This will be sent back to you via the RYA or MCA office, who may then decide whether to issue a restricted RYA endorsement or Boatmasters' Licence, limiting your work to certain jobs or localities or placing other operational restrictions.

**Your certificate of fitness is your property, not your employer's, and should be kept safe.**



## Further reading

- MGN 264 - Medical Fitness Requirements for Those Employed on Boats Certificated under MCA Codes of Practice, Crew of Seagoing Local Passenger Vessels and Nonseagoing Boatmasters
- Notes for applicants on the ML5 form (MSF 4112)
- Merchant Shipping Notices
- MSN 1765(M) Seafarer Medical Examination System and Medical and Eyesight Standards
- MSN 1814(M) List of Approved Doctors with effect [ENG1s only]
- MSN 1745(M+F) Seafarer vision test: Deck/Dual Career Personnel – Merchant Navy and Fishing Vessels

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