



## **MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS OF SEAFARERS, explanation**

### **Obligation to have a medical certificate**

Anyone who signs on in maritime service must have a medical certificate. This at any rate includes crewmembers who are listed in the Safe Manning Document. Seafarers who sign on voluntarily or at the request of the shipping company, captain or for insurance purposes must also be able to provide a valid medical certificate.

Moreover, a valid medical certificate is necessary to apply for a certificate of competency.

### **Medical examiners**

Only doctors who have been appointed by the Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management can perform medical examinations. The medical examiner may not be the seafarer's own attending physician!

### **What to take to the medical examination**

- Seaman's book or a statement by the shipping company that the candidate is (or will be) in service.  
In the case of students, proof of registration at a nautical college is sufficient.
- The old medical certificate.
- The results of the tuberculosis test.
- If blood type is known but is not yet stated in the seaman's book: blood type card or attending physician's statement. In the event blood type is not known, the medical examiner will as yet establish this.
- If a candidate wears glasses or contact lenses: bring spare glasses.

### **Checking and registration**

Via the internet, medical examiners have access to ShipExam: the medical database of the Netherlands Shipping Inspectorate, containing examination results.

Prior to the medical examination, the doctor will check the previous approvals and rejections. This with the purpose of avoiding doctor shopping.

At the end of the examination, the new results will be electronically recorded.

Only appointed doctors have access to this data. The site is secured against unauthorised inquisitive persons.

### **Medical fitness requirements**

The examination is carried out on the basis of the seafarer medical fitness requirements:

Ministerial Decree "Medical Examinations of Seafarers 2005".

### **What does the medical examination entail**

- A questionnaire and interview which will not only cover the current complaints but also earlier incidents of ill health and accidents (anamnesis).
- A general physical examination.
- A test to establish blood type, if this has not yet been carried out.
- A urine test.
- Test to establish near and distance visual acuity, possibly with the aid of glasses (and spare glasses).
- Eye movement test and double vision check.
- Field of vision test.
- Colour vision test.
- Occasionally, a night blindness test.
- Inspection of the ear canal and the eardrum.



- Test to establish auditory acuity with an audiogram and, on occasion, a conversation test.

In the event further information is required for the assessment, an additional examination of blood or stools may take place. Consultation with the attending physician or specialist may be required from time to time.



### **Tuberculosis test**

In principle, a lung photo or Mantoux test is obligatory for everyone unless candidates sail in restricted areas and do not moreover come from areas with a risk of tuberculosis. The medical certificate will, however, state that the sailing area is restricted to North and West Europe and the northern part of the Mediterranean Sea.

### **Approval**

A candidate will be approved if he/she meets the medical requirements. This means that no condition has been discovered that would hinder a safe performance of the activities, that he/she is deemed to act effectively at all times, also in the event of an emergency, and that his/her presence on board does not represent a threat to the health of the other crew and passengers. Medical certificates are valid for a maximum of two years.

### **Rejection and re-examination**

Seafarers may be temporarily or permanently rejected.

If the rejection is temporary, the examiner anticipates that, following treatment, the candidate will be able to return to work within three years. The same medical examiner may re-examine the candidate. Approval by a different medical examiner is invalid.

A permanent rejection means that it is improbable that a candidate will return to work. Following a permanent rejection, candidates may only request a referee for re-examination.

### **Referee**

In the event there is a conflict of opinion on the results of the medical examination, seafarers may request a re-examination through KLM Health Services, phone: +31(0)20-6490372. The re-examination will be carried out by an appointed referee, a doctor who was not involved in the first examination. The referee may carry out the re-examination in person or engage a specialist.

### **Exemption**

A medical certificate offers no guarantees for the future. Seafarers whose vision deteriorates or who contract certain illnesses may be subsequently rejected.

Only in exceptional cases, where a person has gained many years of experience in performing particular duties, certain medical examination requirements may be departed from. A candidate therefore no longer meets the criteria but his/her experience provides sufficient assurance for the safe performance of the activities. The Medical Adviser of the Netherlands Shipping Inspectorate may in that case issue an exemption, often subject to restrictions concerning duties, sailing area or type of vessel.

### **Costs of medical examination**

Charges have been set for the medical examination of shipping personnel. The costs of the medical examination, re-examination, tests and requests for medical information are for the candidate's account. Employers usually assume the costs of the medical examinations.