

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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CHINA EASING UP CREW CHANGE RESTRICTIONS AT 10 PORTS

The announcement that 10 Chinese ports will begin allowing crew change operations, under certain conditions, is welcome news in the fight to relieve hundreds of thousands of mariners held captive in vessels around the world. The International Maritime Organization has said that COVID-19 travel restrictions have prevented the repatriation of almost 400,000 seafarers who are confined to their ships long past their assignments. Seafarers are being pushed to their limits of fatigue. Combined with the challenge of accessing medical services, the probability for accidents has risen as stress affects work and compromises safety.

The 10 Chinese ports allowing for foreign crew changes are Dalian, Tianjin, Qingdao, Shanghai, Ningbo, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Haikou. Crew change operations at the Chinese ports are dependent upon a series of fulfilled requirements including an assessment by local epidemic prevention and control authorities.

U.S. ELECTION: LAW SIMPLIFIES VOTING FOR SAILING MARINERS

A U.S. law enacted in 1986 makes it easier for U.S. merchant mariners, who may be at sea for long stretches, to register to vote and cast their ballot in federal elections. The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) was primarily created to assist members of the U.S. Uniformed Services and Merchant Marine as well as their family members. In many cases, the law allows mariners to perform the registration/voting by email or fax, dependent on specific state rules.

Among its key provisions, UOCAVA provides for an application called the Federal Post Card Application that mariners and other qualified citizens can use to register to vote and request an absentee ballot simultaneously. The law also allows for the use of a "back-up" ballot for federal offices, called the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot. This ballot may be cast by voters covered by the Act who have made timely application for, but have not received, their regular ballot from their state or territory, subject to certain conditions.

You can visit fvap.gov/military-voter which will help make it easy for you to participate in this important election.

WSF VESSEL STRUCK BY LIGHTNING

The Washington State Ferry PUYALLUP was out of service for a few days this week after a lightning strike last weekend that damaged the vessel's navigation system – but resulted in no injuries. The bolt struck the ferry as it was approaching the Edmonds terminal on Saturday afternoon. At least two mariners were knocked off their feet by the strike's impact, but were reportedly unharmed. “It was pretty dramatic,” said WSF spokesperson Ian Sterling but added, “Ferry boats are designed to get hit by lightning.”

Local weatherman Chris Vagaskya said his equipment measured the strike at 133,000 amps. “For reference,” he noted, “most electrical outlets are 15 amps.”

WSF Terminal Supervisor Michael Bunich, who has worked for the ferry system for 22 years said, “It was pretty crazy I've never seen anything like it—it was loud too, it was like a bomb went off. That doesn't happen. It's never happened in my career here and I've been here for a long time.” It was reported that repairs have been completed on the PUYALLUP and the ferry was ready to go back into service.

CMES - LOW FLASHPOINT FUEL OPS COURSES AT USMRC

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School (CMES) is scheduling classes between now and December 31, 2020 at United States Maritime Resource Center (USMRC), Port Canaveral, FL, in the training area “LNG as Fuel.” This authorization covers both the 3-day Basic course, which includes one day of firefighting and a 2-day Advanced course named Low Flashpoint Fuel Operations, which combined account for 5 days of required training to seek employment onboard the new Pasha/Sunrise LNG fueled vessels.

Beginning in 2021, both the Basic and Advanced versions of “LNG as Fuel Training” will be offered at USMRC's Port Canaveral, Florida location as an Alternate Location Training course. Like other off-campus courses, these are subject to the eligibility requirements in Section 1 of the M.E.B.A. Training Plan Rules and Regulations. If you desire to attend these courses in 2020, which run consecutively in Port Canaveral during one business-week (M-F), contact the CMES Registrar immediately and indicate the week or weeks that you can support between October 26 and December 18, 2020. Visit www.mebaschool.org for the full notice and additional contact details.

Once USMRC establishes its regular 2021 calendar-year schedule for Basic and Advanced Low Flashpoint Fuel Operations, each member can schedule his/her training directly with the company. Applications to attend these classes must be sent to the CMES Registrar in advance. Applications are available at all Union halls and can be downloaded from the CMES Website and returned by email, regular mail, or fax.

MORE MARINERS KIDNAPPED OFF WEST AFRICA, PIRACY REPORT REVEALS

The latest report released by the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Center show a rise in piracy and armed robbery on the world's seas in the first nine months of 2020, with a 40% increase in the number of kidnappings reported in the Gulf of Guinea, compared with the same period in 2019. Pirates armed with guns and knives are abducting bigger groups of seafarers at further distances off the West African coast.

The Gulf of Guinea is currently the world's piracy hotspot and 95% of global kidnappings occur there. IMB warns that pirate gangs in the area are "well organized and targeting all vessel types over a wide range."

The situation has improved in the waters near Indonesia with fewer attacks reported, and piracy near Somalia remains under control where it has been quiet since 2018. The last three hostages taken by Somali pirates over the years (that numbered in the thousands at one point) were freed earlier this year. Though piracy in those waters is currently dormant, pirates are still capable of carrying out attacks in that region.

The report details 132 attacks since the start of 2020, up from 119 incidents in the same period last year. Of the 85 seafarers kidnapped from their vessels and held for ransom, 80 were taken in the Gulf of Guinea – in 14 attacks reported off Nigeria, Benin, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Ghana. In the first nine months of 2020, seafarers reported 134 cases of assault, injury and threats, including 85 crewmembers being kidnapped and 31 held hostage onboard their ships. A total of 112 vessels were boarded and six were fired upon, while 12 reported attempted attacks. Two fishing vessels were hijacked, both in the Gulf of Guinea.

"Crews are facing exceptional pressures due to COVID-19, and the risk of violent piracy or armed robbery is an extra stress," said IMB Director Michael Howlett.

DEALS TO BE HAD: NAUTICAL AUCTION TO BENEFIT JOHN W. BROWN

The Foundation supporting the Baltimore-berthed historic ship JOHN W. BROWN is hosting an online auction to benefit the ship's ongoing mission to honor mariners past and present. Along with the JEREMIAH O'BRIEN, which is homeported in San Francisco, California, the JOHN W. BROWN is the last of the operational WWII Liberty ships.

In the lead-up to its online auction, Project Liberty Ship is accepting donations of Merchant Marine and Military uniforms, sports & music memorabilia, household items, hand-crafted furniture, service donations, and others. You can email jwb.auction@outlook.com for details. The donation period ends on October 31st. You can preview the auction items and begin bidding now by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/y2h8b9ru>

The "Trash and Treasure Online Auction" runs until November 11 and new items are added daily. Check it out!

M.E.B.A. ELECTION: OBTAINING A DUPLICATE BALLOT

If you are an M.E.B.A. member and did not receive a ballot – or yours has been lost or destroyed - you can request a duplicate ballot in writing.

The M.E.B.A. By-Laws states, "A member shall be entitled to make a written request of the Impartial Administrator for a duplicate ballot and receive the same provided he states in his letter that he has not received his ballot or that his ballot has been lost or mutilated so that it cannot be used. Duplicate ballots shall be counted unless the original and duplicate ballot mailed to a member are both cast, in which event neither ballot shall be counted."

Please use the following Impartial Administrator contact information to request a duplicate ballot. Any written requests for duplicate ballots made to the M.E.B.A. will be referred to the Impartial Administrator.

TrueBallot, Inc.

3 Bethesda Metro Center
Suite 700
Bethesda, MD 20814
Email: 0212001@trueballot.com

Please make sure you include the address where the duplicate ballot should be sent.

**M.E.B.A. ELECTION: ONLY VOTES FROM MEMBERS
IN GOOD STANDING WILL COUNT**

According to our By-Laws, members who are not in good standing by November 15, 2020 are not eligible to vote in the ongoing M.E.B.A. election. Please refer to the M.E.B.A. By-Laws Article Two, Section 2.

**USE M.E.B.A. WEBSITE DUES PAYMENT OPTION
TO IRON OUT LWOP/VACATION DUES LAPSES**

Some M.E.B.A. bargaining unit members pay dues by automatic Dues Check-Off (DCO). But when DCO members take vacation or (in the case of the Government fleet) Leave without Pay (LWOP), there are lapses in payroll where dues aren't automatically submitted. Those members can iron out the imbalance from a link on the M.E.B.A. homepage (www.mebaunion.org). Click the link, select the bargaining unit in the "Check Off, Catch-Up" section and make sure you remain a member in good standing.

A "Vacation Pay" option is also available. This is useful for port engineers and Union officials who can make these payments online. Many members and applicants think that paying online is the most efficient and advantageous manner to remain in good standing.

ONLINE NOVEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – (All times are local)

Monday, November 2 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;
Tuesday, November 3 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;
Wednesday, November 4 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;
Thursday, November 5 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;
Friday, November 6 – Honolulu@1100.

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and demonstrated track record of readiness, safety, and loyalty in answering America's call to action in times of both peace and war is unrivaled in the world. M.E.B.A. HQ – Phone: (202) 638-5355; mebahq@mebaunion.org. Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries (and to send photos & hot news tips) contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.