

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

The Official Union Newsletter



Number 37 – September 14, 2017

In this issue//M.E.B.A. Payment Portal Revamped//M.E.B.A. Survives the Wrath of Irma//Maersk Talks Continue//New Boston Rep. is on the Job//Jones Act Waiver Having Limited Impact//NTSB to Issue EL FARO Conclusions in December//Sample Exams on NMC Site//Working Group to Review Mariner Exams//NMC will Replace Credentials Lost to Harvey & Irma//Study on Cargo Ship Lightning Strikes//

M.E.B.A.'s PAYMENT PORTAL GETS REVAMP, NEW FUNCTIONALITY

The payment portal accessed from M.E.B.A.'s homepage (www.mebaunion.org) has been souped-up to allow members and applicants additional ease when making a dues or service charge payment and to assist the P.A.F. and Good & Welfare funds. Payments can be made by credit card, debit card or through a checking account. Long in demand, a recurring payment option has been installed enabling automatic quarterly payments so members can "set it and forget it" and always stay current.

You simply check the "Recurring Billing" box that appears at the top of the page when you're filling out your information to enable automatic quarterly payments. This feature is also available to support the Good & Welfare and the Political Action Fund on a monthly basis. P.A.F. is crucial for keeping U.S. shipping and the Union's interests viable in the halls of Congress. The recent hurricanes and the desire to lend assistance to members, applicants and retirees in their time of need is a good reason to support the G&W Fund.

Some M.E.B.A. bargaining unit members pay dues by the automatic Dues Check-Off (DCO) system. 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 are not automatically submitted. Those members can go to the M.E.B.A. payment portal, select their bargaining unit on the "Check Off Catch-Up" section and make sure they remain as a member in good standing.

Finally, a "Vacation Pay" option is now available on the portal. This will prove useful for port engineers and Union officials who can now make these payments online.

Members and applicants will find the portal to be the most efficient and advantageous manner to remain in good standing and extend a needed monetary infusion to vital Union programs. You can access the electronic payment portal by visiting the M.E.B.A. homepage (www.mebaunion.org).

M.E.B.A. SURVIVES THE WRATH OF IRMA

M.E.B.A. members and our Union halls in the southeast withstood the wrath of Hurricane Irma following a crazy week of weather. Officials and members at our halls in Tampa, Jacksonville and Charleston, SC used advance notice of the approaching hurricane to batten down the hatches and secure their halls, including sandbagging, before scampering back to their own abodes to repeat the

process. In each case, the halls persevered against Irma's devastating force though our hall in Tampa will need a little roof work. Some of our members and applicants in those cities and elsewhere reported minor damage after their homes were pelted with high winds and an extraordinary amount of water. Many of them were blacked out for days and some are only now regaining power.

MAERSK TALKS CONTINUE

Another round of talks with Maersk Line Ltd. are underway this week at M.E.B.A. Headquarters as the Union works toward a new agreement covering members working under three MLL contracts (MLL, E-Ships, and M-Ships). The sides convened today (Thursday) for two days of bargaining. M.E.B.A. rank and file member Bill Cadden is part of our negotiating team this week.

The parties have scheduled another round of talks in Norfolk on September 26-29 shortly before the contracts expire at the end of September. Anyone interested in attending the Norfolk session should contact Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan by email at jcallahan@mebaunion.org.

NEW BOSTON REP. IS ON THE JOB

New Boston Representative Stuart Fay is wrapping up his first week of service at the hall this week. Outgoing Rep. Pete Tsarides is itching to head off toward a well-deserved retirement but spent the week making sure Stuart is acclimated and ready to tackle the mountain of work ahead.

Fay was appointed to the position by M.E.B.A.'s District Executive Committee. A 1994 Massachusetts Maritime Academy graduate, he had been sailing as Chief Engineer in the Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket Steamship Authority fleet following years of deep-sea experience. Stuart is ready to get down to work on behalf of the membership. He can be emailed at sfay@mebaunion.org.

JONES ACT WAIVER HAVING LIMITED IMPACT

A temporary Jones Act waiver granted last week in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma is only having a limited impact according to analysts, as reported by Bloomberg.

Homeland Security Acting Secretary Elaine Duke approved a 7 day Jones Act waiver last week that was later extended to Sept. 22 to address disruptions in the oil supply system. As members know, the Jones Act requires that vessels used to transport cargo and passengers between U.S. ports be owned by U.S. citizens, built in U.S. shipyards, and manned by U.S. citizen crews. The waiver is limited to transportation of refined products in hurricane-affected areas and permits oil and gas operators to use foreign-flagged vessels to move petroleum cargoes within affected areas.

The storm affected about 20 refineries of which half are still trying to return to normal output levels. Bloomberg reported that analysts believed the effect of the waiver appeared "minimal." Jones Act waivers are rare. The last one occurred in 2012 after Superstorm/Hurricane Sandy.

NTSB TO RELEASE FINAL EL FARO FINDINGS IN DECEMBER

Following an exhaustive investigation into the sinking of the EL FARO, the National Transportation Safety Board announced it would release its conclusions as to the probable cause of the tragedy. The 790-foot U.S.-flag cargo ship sank near the Bahamas in October 2015 as Hurricane Joaquin swept through the area. All 33 crewmembers perished.

At its scheduled Dec. 12 meeting in Washington DC, the NTSB will issue its determination of the probable cause of the sinking along with factors that may have contributed to the accident. The Board

is also expected to vote on recommendations to address safety issues uncovered during the investigation. The board meeting is open to the public and will be webcast live at <http://ntsbcapitolconnection.org/>.

SAMPLE EXAMS ON NMC SITE

The Coast Guard has posted a new set of Merchant Mariner Credential Sample Examinations on the National Maritime Center website and plan to refresh the questions annually. Visit www.uscg.mil/nmc and select “Sample Exams” on the “Examinations” page of the website.

NMC WILL REPLACE CREDENTIALS LOST TO HARVEY & IRMA

Duplicate Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMC) may be issued free of charge to mariners whose credentials were lost or destroyed as a result of Hurricane Harvey or Irma. Mariners need to provide a statement of loss to the National Maritime Center (NMC) containing detailed information. The full NMC notice has been posted on the M.E.B.A. website (www.mebaunion.org)

For further information contact NMC by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (1-888-427-5662).

COAST GUARD FORMING WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW MARINER EXAMS

The U.S. Coast Guard is putting together a working group to review the merchant mariner examination process. Specifically, the group will review existing and new examination questions for accuracy, and review the accuracy and availability of examination references, length of examinations, and the use of standard technologies in administering, scoring, and analyzing examinations.

The working group will include representatives from Coast Guard-approved training providers; a deck and engineering representative from the State Maritime Academies; Credentialed deck and engineering officers or ratings; a Human Performance Technology representative; a member of the Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee and members of other Federal Advisory Committees as needed to review industry segment specific subject matter.

The Coast Guard is seeking résumés from interested parties in order to identify the most qualified persons to complete the required review. Contact Coast Guard’s Cathleen Mauro at Cathleen.B.Mauro@uscg.mil for further information.

SIGN UP FOR M.E.B.A. VACATION/PENSION PLAN DIRECT DEPOSIT

Designed for convenience, M.E.B.A. members can help themselves by taking advantage of the Pension Plan and Vacation Plan Direct Deposits that will help save them time and ease Plans processing costs. Authorization forms are available from the Plans Office, Plans Outport Offices and at the Plans’ website – www.mebaplans.org (Forms and Documents, Vacation Plan Forms) & (Forms and Documents, Pension Plan Forms). Complete details are available on the Plans’ website as well. Contact (800) 811-6322 or vacation@mebaplans.org & pension@mebaplans.org for more info.

STUDY ON CARGO SHIP LIGHTNING STRIKES

Diesel emissions from ships cause twice as many lightning strikes to hit the world’s busiest shipping lanes, according to a study published in Geophysical Research Letters. Scientists used 12 years of lightning strike data collected over shipping lanes in the northeastern Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, where emissions are the highest globally. They made observations about the microphysics of cloud drop formation, interactions, and freezing.

Lightning strikes are more common along the same angular paths ships take along routes, and cannot be explained by meteorological factors, such as winds or the temperature structure of the atmosphere. Lightning “enhancement” stems from aerosol particles such as PM2.5, organic carbon, and black carbon emitted in the engine exhaust of ships traveling along these routes. Aerosol particles act as nuclei for a cloud drops, which allows more cloud water to be transported to high altitudes, where several types of molecules collide, producing electrification and lightning. Adjacent areas with similar climates did not show the same lightning density.

The study’s authors concluded: “These shipping lanes are thus an ongoing experiment on how human activities that lead to airborne particulate matter pollution can perturb storm intensity and lightning. “Our findings suggest that even small absolute increases in remote marine aerosol particles due to human activities could have a substantial impact on storm intensity and lightning. “As such, there have likely been increases in storm vertical development and lightning in remote regions since the pre-industrial era, which has consequences not only for human life and property, but also for atmospheric composition and climate.”

REMEMBER TO UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION WITH HQ

Be sure to inform Headquarters if you have changed your contact information. There is an address change form on our website to help expedite the process. It can be found at www.mebaunion.org under the “Members” tab. Alternatively, you can send your updated information to Doris Fitzgerald at HQ by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at membership@mebaunion.org. Since the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore and Headquarters databases are NOT linked, you must also forward a signed change of address form to the Plans Office if you wish to update your information with them.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monday, October 2 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;
Tuesday, October 3 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;
Wednesday, October 4 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;
Thursday, October 5 – L.A.@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;
Friday, October 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 proven 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 contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org