

Lapse in Appropriations and Government Shutdown UPDATE #1: Mitigation Efforts – Extensions

Due to the government shutdown, the National Maritime Center (NMC) and all Regional Examination Centers (RECs) remain closed. Customer walk-in service at the RECs is suspended. Examinations and other REC appointments are cancelled. To mitigate the impact caused by the government shutdown, the NMC has implemented the following measures:

- The Application Submission Portal (ASAP) for submission of applications and supporting documentation remains active. Processing will resume once appropriations are restored.
- Merchant Mariner Credentials (National Endorsements only) and Medical Certificates (National and Pilot expiration dates only) that expire in February and March 2026 remain valid until April 30, 2026. Mariners who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential AND a copy of the attached letter while sailing under the authority of those credentials. The NMC will not issue separate or replacement MMCs or Medical Certificates reflecting the extension.
- International Convention Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, as amended, for MMCs and Medical Certificates:
 - MMCs: Pursuant to Article VIII, dispensations may be granted for continued service for mariners operating on endorsements that expired on or after February 1, 2026, provided a renewal application was submitted to the NMC and the employer applied to the Coast Guard for dispensation. STCW dispensations that are approved will expire up to August 31, 2026. Once the STCW dispensation letter is issued, mariners shall carry the letter AND a copy of this bulletin with the MMC. Requests for dispensation must be submitted via e-mail with a subject line “**STCW Dispensation**” to STCWDispensations@uscg.mil and must include the following information: ship name, IMO number, ship tonnage, mariner name, mariner reference number, capacity per STCW regulations, credential issuance and expiration dates, company name, company point of contact, and valid mariner e-mail address.
 - Medical Certificates: In accordance with STCW Regulation I/9, when the STCW expiration date of a Medical Certificate occurs during a voyage, the certificate remains valid for 3 months from the expiration date.

- Additional information letters, approval to test letters, mariner training course completion certificates, and drug test letters that expire in February and March 2026 are extended until April 30, 2026. The NMC will not issue updated letters reflecting the extension.
- Qualified Assessor and Designated Examiner certification letters and course approvals that expire in February and March 2026, are extended until May 31, 2026. The NMC will not issue updated certificates/letters reflecting the extension.
- Mariner Examinations:
 - Mariners who began but did not complete all modules of an examination prior to February 13, 2026, may resume testing without penalty once the NMC reopens. Testing should be completed within 60 days of reopening. Contact the NMC regarding waivers due to sea service.
 - 90-day retest periods are paused beginning on February 13, 2026, and will restart upon reopening. Contact the NMC regarding waivers due to sea service.
- For questions regarding credentialing issues related to National Defense, marine employers are advised to contact our Customer Service Center.

For updates on NMC and REC operating status, please monitor the [NMC website](#). For questions, contact our Customer Service Center via the [NMC online chat system](#), by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

The NMC understands the shutdown will affect our industry customers and stakeholders, and we apologize for any potential inconvenience.

Sincerely,

/P. A. Drayer/

Patrick A. Drayer
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspections

**U.S. Department of
Homeland Security**

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commanding Officer
United States Coast Guard
National Maritime Center

100 Forbes Drive
Martinsburg, WV 25404
Phone: (888) 427-5662
E-mail: IASKNMC@uscg.mil

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February 20, 2026

Dear U.S. Mariner,

Due to the government shutdown, the U.S. Coast Guard is currently unable to process applications for mariner credentials. To provide relief to affected mariners, consistent with the authority of 46 United States Code §7507 and §7508, the Coast Guard is granting an extension, effective immediately, to Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMC) (National Endorsements only) and Medical Certificates (National and Pilot expiration dates only). This extension is valid through April 30, 2026, for mariners whose credentials expire in February and March of 2026.

All mariners sailing under the authority of their National Endorsement(s) should print and retain a copy of this letter with their MMC and Medical Certificate to present upon request by the U.S. Coast Guard, other agencies or officials. The National Maritime Center (NMC) does not intend to issue separate or replacement MMCs or Medical Certificates reflecting this extension. Additionally, this extension applies only to domestic operations and does not apply to Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) endorsements.

Applications submitted before or during the government shutdown will be held and processed once the NMC reopens and is legally authorized to resume operations.

If you have questions, visit the NMC website or contact the NMC Customer Service Center by using the NMC online chat system, by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick A. Drayer".

Patrick A. Drayer
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Officer in Charge, Marine Inspections