

**Medical requirements for crews of commercial vessels in NSW**  
(version 1/03/2005)



**Medical and eyesight examinations**

The medical standards for crews of commercial vessels are set by NSW legislation and are based on the National Standard for Commercial Vessels Part D (replacing the USL Code). These standards are detailed in the NSW Maritime medical fitness certificate form supplied with each application form. A qualified medical practitioner must complete this form and provide their contact details on it. Medical reports that are not submitted on this form will not be accepted unless all the conditions listed by the legislation are specifically addressed.

Warning: Occasionally applicants who have never previously been aware of any health/eyesight problem, have completed their training courses only to find that they do not meet the medical conditions (particularly colour vision). It is therefore strongly recommended that you ensure that you meet these requirements before commencing any training/service.

NOTE: Medical/eyesight examinations are valid for two years only and must be current at the time of initial issue and revalidation of a certificate.

Persons applying for recognition of a certificate issued by another marine authority will be required to provide a medical report if the date of issue of their current certificate occurred more than 2 years before applying to NSW Maritime.



**What if you don't meet all of the medical/eyesight standards?**

Persons who fail any of the standards may be considered on a case by case basis. If this occurs a relevant specialist should be consulted to provide the Authority with details of your condition (particularly epilepsy) and an appraisal of your ability to perform the duties of a commercial vessel crew member without affecting the safety of the vessel or persons on board.

If you have a colour vision defect, you may need to have a Holmes-Wright lantern test done by a qualified optometrist. If you have poor or nil vision in one eye you may have the option of being practically assessed by a NSW Maritime examiner aboard a vessel to demonstrate your ability to safely operate a vessel by day and night.

Please note that if the Authority decides to allow a certificate to be issued in cases where the medical/eyesight standards are not met, the certificate will be endorsed as "Restricted" and may have conditions attached. Other state marine authorities are not obligated to recognise such certificates so you may not be able operate in other jurisdictions. Any qualification issued with medical/eyesight concessions is subject to continuous review and may be withdrawn at any time by the Authority.

The medical/eyesight form must be used for any initial medical/eyesight report and it can be downloaded with the Marine certification application form file found elsewhere at this web site – see "Forms – Commercial Vessels – Certification)".

## **Extract from the National Standard for Commercial Vessels Part D Annex C**

### **Medical Standards**

#### **Medical Fitness**

##### **1. SCOPE**

This Annex prescribes the level of medical fitness required by holders of Certificates of Competency issued under this standard.

##### **2. GENERAL**

###### **2.1 Certificate of Medical Fitness**

Where a Certificate of Medical Fitness is required, the following requirements specified in this Annex shall be met:

- a) Eyesight (vision) as specified in Clause 4.
- b) Eyesight (colour-vision) as specified in Clause 5.
- c) Medical as specified in Clause 6.

A person is deemed to hold a Certificate of Medical Fitness if they can demonstrate that they have satisfactorily met these requirements.

###### **2.2 Declaration of Medical Fitness**

Where a Declaration of Medical Fitness is required, the requirements specified in Clause 6 (medical requirements) of this Annex shall be met.

An Authority shall determine the form and manner in which the declaration will be made.

Where the declaration shows that the applicant suffers from a condition in Clauses 6.3 to 6.10, an Authority may require a further medical examination.

###### **2.3 Satisfactory level of Medical Fitness**

Where a satisfactory level of medical fitness is required, the following requirements specified in this Annex should be met:

- a) Eyesight (vision) as specified in Clause 4.
- b) Medical as specified in Clause 6.

Where a holder of a Certificate of Competency's level of Medical Fitness alters so that it no longer meets these requirements, the person shall advise the Authority of the change prior to operating under this Certificate.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

In this Annex the following definition applies:

#### Aids to vision—

glasses or contact lenses which have been prescribed by a qualified optometrist or eye specialist to correct refractive error of a persons eye.

### 4. EYESIGHT (VISION)

#### 4.1 Vision tests

Vision tests shall be conducted by a suitably qualified medical practitioner, optometrist, eye specialist, or an approved examiner of an Authority, who will provide the applicant with documentation (eg: Medical Certificate) to testify to the result.

#### 4.2 Use of aids to vision

Aids to vision are the only optical aids, which may be used in a vision test. A person whose certificate of medical fitness indicates that an aid to vision was used for the purpose of being found medically fit shall, at all times when on duty on a vessel use such aid when appropriate, and keep a spare aid to vision available.

#### 4.3 Deck crew

Deck crew are required to demonstrate that their vision meets the standard specified in Table C1.

Persons with only one eye, or poor vision in one eye may be required to demonstrate their ability to perform their duties as a watchkeeper.

**Table C1 — Eyesight (Vision) tests — Deck Crew**

<b>With or without aids to vision</b>	<b>Without aids to vision</b>
Snellen Principle 6/6 (0.0 LogMar) in the better eye. Snellen Principle 6/9 (0.2 LogMar) in the other eye. Read N5 chart at 300mm-500mm.	Snellen Principle 6/60 (1.0 LogMar) in each eye.
NOTE: Candidates should achieve the standards provided in both columns.	

#### 4.4 Engine crew

Engine Crew are required to demonstrate that their vision meets the standard specified in Table C2. Persons with only one eye, or poor vision in one eye may be required to demonstrate their ability to perform their duties as a watchkeeper.

**Table C2 — Eyesight (Vision) tests — Engine Crew**

<b>With or without aids to vision</b>	<b>Without aids to vision</b>
Snellen Principle 6/9 (0.2 LogMar) in one eye Snellen Principle 6/9 (0.2 LogMar) in the other eye Read N5 chart at 300mm-500mm;	Snellen Principle 6/60 (1.0 LogMar) in each eye
NOTE: Candidates should achieve the standards provided in both columns.	

## **5. EYESIGHT (COLOUR-VISION)**

### **5.1 Colour-vision tests**

Colour-vision tests shall be conducted by a suitably qualified optometrist, eye specialist, medical practitioner, or an officer on an Authority, who will provide the applicant with documentation (eg: Medical Certificate) to testify to the result.

Colour-vision testing is not required for revalidation or renewal of Certificates of Competency.

For the purposes of upgrading to a higher level Certificate of Competency, an additional colour-vision test shall only be required where an Ishihara or Holmes-lantern test Type “B” was not conducted for the original certificate, but is a requirement for the new certificate being sought.

### **5.2 Use of aids to vision**

Aids to vision, provided they are not coloured or tinted, are the only optical aids which may be used in a colour-vision test.

Colour correction devices shall not be worn for colour testing.

### **5.3 Deck crew**

Deck crew are required to demonstrate that they have passed one of the following:

- a) The Ishihara Test.
- b) Holmes-Wright Lantern Test type “B”.

In the case of applicants for Master Class 5, Skipper Grade 3, Coxswain or General Purpose Hand Certificate of Competency, an Authority may, in lieu of the above requirement, accept a statement from a suitably qualified optometrist, eye specialist or medical practitioner, that after having examined the applicant, the applicant suffers no greater abnormality in colour-vision than could be tested by the Ishihara Test.

NOTE: This provision is not evidence of meeting the colour-vision requirements for Master 4 or Skipper 2 or higher certificates.

### **5.4 Engineering crew**

Applicants for a Marine Engine Driver Grade 3 or Marine Engine Driver Grade 2 are not required to undertake a colour-vision test.

Applicants for Marine Engine Driver Grade 1 and Engineer Class 3 are required to pass one of the following tests:

- a) The Ishihara Test.

- b) Holmes-Wright Lantern Test type "B".
- c) A colour-matching test in accordance with Marine Orders Part 9, Appendix 5.

If an applicant fails to meet the requirement for colour-vision, an Authority may accept a letter from an employer, (not necessarily in shipping), to say that the person has satisfactorily performed similar engineering duties, over a 2 year period, as a deemed to satisfy solution for the colour-vision requirement.

## **5.5 Conduct of Ishihara test**

The Ishihara tests shall be conducted using all 24 plates. In order to pass, a candidate shall correctly identify at least 21 of the 24 plates. The failure of 4 or more plates will constitute a failure of the colour-vision test. Guidance on carrying out the tests is in AMSA Marine Orders Part 9, Appendix 5. (see [www.amsa.gov.au](http://www.amsa.gov.au))

Where an applicant wishes to appeal the failure of an Ishihara colour-vision test, the applicant may be re-examined. A Holmes-Wright lantern test type "B" must be used in lieu of the Ishihara test.

## **6. MEDICAL**

### **6.1 Examinations**

For the purpose of gaining a Certificate of Medical Fitness, medical examinations shall be conducted by a suitably qualified medical practitioner recording the result on a medical form.

### **6.2 Requirements**

Medical fitness should be based on normal criteria.

In determining whether or not an applicant meets the medical fitness requirements in this standard, due account should be taken by the medical practitioner of the following:

- a) The nature of employment for which certification is intended.
- b) The medical and employment history of the person.
- c) The requirements specified in Clauses 6.3 to 6.10.

These standards are applicable to candidates for all levels of a certificate, and shall be met before a Certificate of Competency can be issued, renewed or revalidated except where otherwise stated.

NOTE: These requirements are to ensure the person can perform the relevant duties without creating an unacceptable risk to him/herself, other members of the crew or the safe operation of a vessel.

Where there is difficulty meeting the requirements in Clause 6.3 to 6.10 an Authority may review the case and, considering the circumstances and level of risk involved, may issue a restricted Certificate of Competency in accordance with Clause 1.9.1, or a Temporary Permit to Serve in accordance with clause 1.9.2, or impose any other special conditions on the use of the certificate.

NOTE: This will provide alternative methods of managing the risks associated with safe operation of the vessel.

### **6.3 Hernia**

No condition of hernia unless satisfactorily corrected by a curative operation.

### **6.4 Speech**

Applicants speech should be clear and without hesitation such that orders can be communicated effectively to other crew during times of emergency.

## **6.5 Hearing**

The whispered voice, a watch, or other proven tests should test hearing ability. However, where there is doubt as to the fitness of a person, testing should be conducted by means of an audiogram.

When an audiogram is used the hearing requirements are:

- a) Hearing loss in each ear shall not be greater than 20 decibels (AMA standard) for the frequencies of 500 Hz, 1000 Hz and 2000 Hz.
- b) Where hearing level is less than the above standards, hearing aids may be accepted, providing the above levels can be reached when using the aid.

## **6.6 Artificial limbs**

Artificial limbs shall not interfere with the normal duties the holder of the certificate would be expected to perform and each case will be considered on its merit by the marine Authority.

## **6.7 Cardiac pacemaker**

A person with a cardiac pacemaker shall not serve on a vessel unless a medical practitioner, taking into account the nature of the disease and the reliability of the pacemaker, provides a statement that the person can undertake the normal duties the holder of the certificate would be expected to perform, and that the safe operation of the vessel will not be affected.

## **6.8 Epilepsy**

A person with confirmed, current epilepsy, irrespective of control medications shall not serve on a vessel.

A person with a past history of epilepsy, including febrile convulsions as a child, a single seizure or cluster of seizures due to exceptional and non-repeatable circumstances, who has demonstrated a seizure free period of two years while not on any anticonvulsant medication is fit for service in a vessel.

## **6.9 Diabetes**

A person suffering from insulin dependent diabetes may be approved to serve on a vessel providing a medical practitioner provides a statement that the person is managing the diabetes effectively.

## **6.10 Tuberculosis**

A person who has been affected by pulmonary tuberculosis shall not serve on a vessel unless the disease is controlled or has been inactive in that person for at least the previous six months.

## **7 PERIOD OF CURRENCY**

A medical practitioner issuing a Certificate of Medical Fitness should specify the date the examination was undertaken.

NOTE: The period of validity for Certificates of Medical Fitness should not exceed 2 years.