

# NVIC 04-08 Medical and Physical Evaluation Guidelines for Merchant Mariner

## Why this Medical NVIC?

The intent of this NVIC is **not** to drive mariners that have medical conditions or are suffering from the effects of aging out of the industry. The Coast Guard strongly believes that this Medical NVIC will enhance safety on board the US commercial fleet as well as safety for the general public. Service on board a vessel may be physically challenging and imposes unique physical and mental demands. This NVIC honors the mariner by promoting mariner health and well being. These medical guidelines will ensure that the US has a fleet of strong and robust merchant mariners that meet both domestic and international requirements.

This NVIC provides guidance to medical practitioners, mariners and Coast Guard personnel to ensure that the mariners' physical and medical status meet the existing requirements of US and International law. This NVIC puts current Coast Guard practices into writing making the policies transparent for all to see and promoting consistent application of the requirements for all mariners. The physical and medical requirements can be found in the following documents:

- ◆ International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW)
- ◆ 46 USC subtitle II part E
- ◆ 46 CFR Chapter I, Subchapter B
- ◆ 46 CFR Parts 401-402



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Why does it take so long for medical review?**

A. As a result of centralization of the mariner credential review process the NMC has assumed an increased case load but has staff shortages in the medical branch. NMC has been increasing staffing and anticipates adding additional medical evaluators and support staff soon.

**Q. I don't have any medical issues. Why is my file in medical?**

A. Your file may be forwarded to MEB if there is an indication of a past medical history that is cause for concern. Additionally, if there are any missing or incomplete sections of the physical exam form, your file will be forwarded to the MEB.

**Q. I never had to provide any additional information in the past, why now?**

A. As a result of National Transportation Safety Board recommendations, all medical information is now being reviewed by medically trained professionals. The additional information you are being asked to provide assists the medical staff to ensure your medical condition is sufficiently controlled to decrease any risk to maritime and public safety.

**Q. What is the appeal process if I disagree with the decision?**

A. Detailed information on the appeal process is available at the NMC web site.

**For further information you can contact the NMC  
as follows:**

marinermedical@uscg.mil

<http://www.uscg.mil/nmc/default.asp>

NMC Help Desk: 1-888-IASKNMC or  
1-888-427-5662



## *A Mariner's Guide to NVIC 04-08*

### *Medical and Physical Evaluation Guidelines for Merchant Mariner Credentials*



Commandant (CG-5221)  
2100 Second St. SW  
Washington, DC 20593  
202-372-1405

## Statistics—How many applications result in a DENIAL as a result of these medical guidelines?

If you have a medical condition that is listed in the NVIC will you be denied your credential? Most likely the answer is **NO**. Out of all applications received, approximately 13% are forwarded to the Medical Evaluation Branch (MEB) at the National Maritime Center (NMC) for further evaluation.

**94%** of applications forwarded clear first level medical review, and **5%** clear the second level review.

The overall denial rate for all applications is 0.11% or **1/10th of 1 percent!**

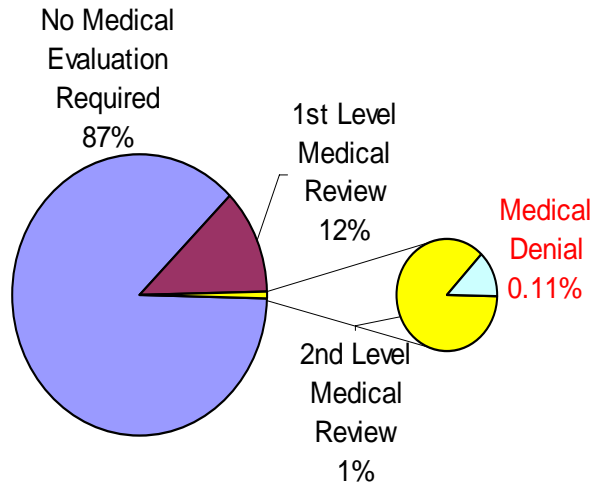
If you fall in the 1/10th of 1 percent and you are denied a credential for medical reasons, then you are entitled to due process and are encouraged to use the reconsiderations and appeals process in order to provide additional information or extenuating circumstances that may help explain why you should be granted a waiver.

### Who will use the guidance in this NVIC?

Medical personnel who conduct required exams can use the NVIC to help them understand the Maritime industry and the requirements to ensure medical fitness of a mariner. Coast Guard Personnel who review merchant mariner applications will also use the information in the NVIC to ensure that complete physical exams are conducted. As a merchant mariner, you can use the NVIC to understand regulatory requirements for medical fitness.



## MEDICAL EVALUATIONS



**72 of 65,000 applications received resulted in a medical denial.**

### Why are mariners being denied?

In general, any medical condition that has the potential to either cause sudden incapacitation, or result in a gradual loss of cognitive or physical performance may be subject to further review by the Coast Guard.

The top 5 reasons for denial include:

1. Implantable cardiac defibrillators; cardiomyopathy.
2. Medications: chronic use of narcotics/amphetamines/benzodiazepines.
3. Uncontrolled diabetes.
4. Mental health: psychotic disorders; uncontrolled bipolar disorder.
5. Uncontrolled sleep disorders.

### Medications



**PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS:** You are required to report all prescription medications prescribed, filled or refilled and/or taken within 30 days of your medical exam.

**OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATIONS:** You are required to report all non-prescription medications that were used for a period of 30 or more days within 90 days prior to the date of your medical exam.

As with the medical conditions, just because you are taking, or have taken either prescription or non-prescription medication, this does not mean that your application will be denied. The MEB will evaluate the medications you are taking, the side effects you have experienced and will make a determination as to whether or not your use of the medication could impact your ability to safely work on your vessel.

### Physical Ability and



The NVIC provides guidance to medical practitioners in regards to applicants with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40.0 or higher or if the practitioner doubts the physical abilities of the applicant. If your BMI is 40 or higher or your medical practitioner has doubts in regards to your physical abilities, he or she will need to certify that you can meet the physical ability guidelines outlined in the NVIC. These guidelines were established to represent the physical demands faced by crewmembers on board a vessel during an emergency response. For example, the medical practitioner may need to evaluate your ability to carry and handle fire hoses and fire extinguishers.

