

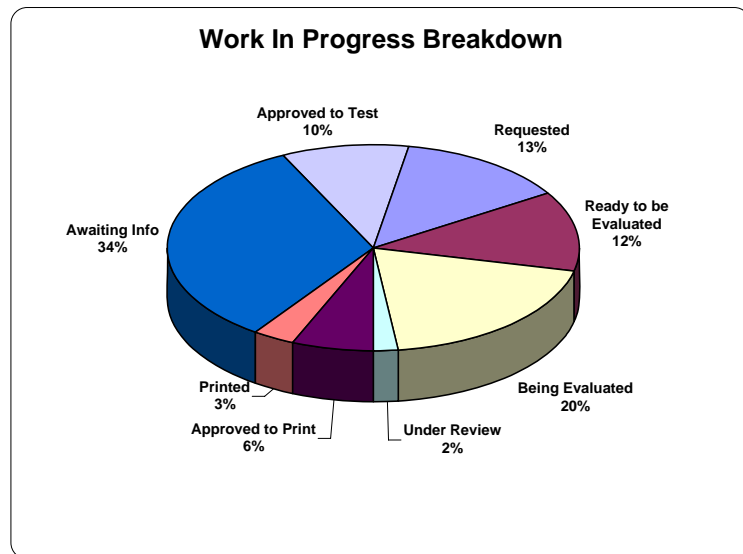


March 12, 2008

Mariner Licensing and Documentation (MLD) New Procedures to Reduce Credential Processing Time

The National Maritime Center, in an effort to improve customer service and reduce credential processing time, will implement new procedures on April 7, 2008 to encourage mariners to respond within 90 days to requests for additional information needed to complete processing of their merchant mariner credential. Currently 25,949 credential requests are in process nationwide. Over 33% or 8,542 of these credentials are missing critical information needed to complete an evaluation of the application. In all cases, letters have been sent to the mariners asking them to submit information so the Coast Guard can continue processing their application.

Many mariners respond to these requests in a timely manner and the application is processed quickly. In other cases, processing is suspended while the Coast Guard waits for the mariner to respond. Analysis shows that 5,274 credentials requested have been in this suspended state for over 90 days, greatly contributing to the total processing time for these mariners.



Historically, applicants have been given one year to respond to these “awaiting information” requests. It is a common misconception that this one-year period was driven by regulation when in fact it was set by an internal policy dating back many years. According to the Code of Federal Regulations parts 10.202 (a) and 12.02-9(e), only an “approved” application is valid for one-year. An approved application is defined by Coast Guard Commandant Instruction as one which contains all the information and service required by law or regulation.

In order improve customer service and reduce credential processing time, the National Maritime Center (NMC) will be implementing a 90-day time frame for mariners to respond to these awaiting information requests. Instructions for this 90-day time frame will be included in letters sent to mariners beginning April 7, 2008. When a mariner receives a letter from the NMC requesting additional information, the individual will have 90-days from the date of the letter to provide the requested information. During this time frame, Coast Guard will be contacting the mariner as a follow up to remind them about the pending request. If the mariner does not respond during this 90-day time frame the entire application will be withdrawn from processing

and mailed back to the address listed on the mariner's application (CG Form 719B). Any user fees paid by the mariner that were not used, such as examination and/or issuance fees, will be applied to a future application should the mariner choose to reapply. If the mariner obtains the information after the 90-day time frame has expired, they can simply reapply and we will continue to process the credential as fast as possible. Mariners who choose not to reapply will be offered prompt refunds upon request.

Currently, mariners that submit a complete application and who don't have significant medical or security issues are receiving their credentials within 10 to 28 days. Missing information results in delays. The ten most common types of information missing from credential applications forwarded to NMC include:

1. Missing or Insufficient Sea Service
2. Amplifying Information from Physician
3. Missing Training Certificate(s) (First Aid/CPR, Radar, BST, Bridge Resource Management, Basic & Advanced Fire Fighting, GMDSS, ARPA)
4. Missing Issuance User Fee
5. Missing or Insufficient Tankerman Requirements - Proof of Transfers/Service/Recency/Training
6. Missing or Incomplete STCW Assessment(s)
7. Missing Examination User Fee
8. Missing or Incomplete TOAR-Towing Officer's Assessment Record
9. Missing FCC License
10. Missing continuity renewal statement

The Coast Guard is working hard to ensure mariners receive their credentials in a timely fashion. Mariners can also help by ensuring the information listed above is included in their application and by responding promptly to requests, should the Coast Guard find information missing from their application.

As we continue to improve the Mariner Licensing and Documentation program, we ask for your patience and welcome your suggestions. Please email your comments and suggestions for improvements to iasknmc@uscg.mil.

Sincerely,

David C. Stalfort
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