



## Merchant Shipping Notice MSN-0030

### IMMARBE

International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize

## Guidelines to Owners, Operators and Masters on Port State Control Inspections

For circulation to:

ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS, DEPUTY REGISTRARS,  
RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENTS.

MSN Superseded:

Revision No.(mm/dd/yy):

Issue Date:

**July 24, 2007**

---

---

As you are aware, our Registry is determined to reduce Port State Control (PSC) detentions incurred by our registered vessels in order to attain the White Lists of all MOUs on PSC in 2009. Currently, we have attained QUALSHIP 21 status (Quality Shipping in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) in the United States Coast Guard. However, much improvement is necessary in the Paris MOU and Tokyo MOU.

At this juncture, it is important to emphasize that it is of cardinal importance to ensure that your vessels are properly maintained and are, in all respects, compliant. Failure to do so will mean that the respective Owners, operators and their vessels will develop a poor detention record which will not only subject them to costly delays and repeated PSC inspections, but will adversely affect their standing with charterers, shippers, receivers, terminals etc. **This will in turn affect their chartering prospects as well as the resale value of their vessels. Put simply, an Owner who does not maintain his vessel is acting against his best interests by being “penny wise and pound foolish.” All too often, we have found that a detention was the result of lack of maintenance by the crew and improper management/lack of supervision by the Owners/Operators.**

At the same time, an Owner's/Operator's substandard performance, particularly during the period between surveys resulting in detentions, will adversely affect our rating as a Flag State in the MOUs' on PSC detention statistics which will in turn deprive us from attracting quality Owners of modern tonnage to our Registry. Consequently, we have in place **a system of inspections** by Flag State General Safety Inspectors (GSIs) in order to assist Owners/Operators to ensure that their vessels are compliant as well as **a system of fines** in order to deter them from substandard operation. **Repeated detentions/a poor detention record will result in the deregistration of a vessel.**

By way of assistance to Owners, Operators and Masters in attaining a better understanding of the system of Port State Control Inspections, we have decided to issue the ensuing guidelines. Briefly:

1. **Responsibility**

- The IMO Conventions make it very clear that **the shipowner and the Master are responsible for the correct implementation of the relevant Conventions, Regulations.**
- **The Flag State Administrations have the obligation to survey and inspection and to ensure that their ships are in compliance with the relevant Conventions, Regulations.**

2. **Important International Conventions IMO/ILO**

- **The most important IMO Conventions are:** SOLAS, Load Lines, MARPOL, STCW, Tonnage Convention, Collision Regulations. These also provide for control procedures to be followed by parties to these Conventions with regard to foreign ships visiting their ports i.e. Port State Control.
- **The most important IMO Conventions for the purposes of PSC are:**
  - ILO C92 and C133 Accommodation of crews
  - ILO 147 Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976 and its Protocol of 1996. These incorporate several ILO Conventions e.g. ILO C180 on Seafarer's Hours of Work and the Manning of Ships Convention 1996.

3. **Procedures for Port State Control**

Basic guidance on the conduct of Port State Control inspections, the recognition of deficiencies of a ship, its equipment or its crew and the application of control procedures is contained in IMO Resolution A.787(19) as amended by Resolution A.882(21). Briefly,

- 3.1 Under the applicable Conventions, foreign ships are subject to Port State Control including boarding, inspection, remedial action and possible detention by Port State Control Officers (PSCOs) duly authorized by the Port State.
- 3.2 Upon boarding and introduction to the Master, the PSCO will conduct:
- **an examination of the vessel's certificates and documents.**
  - **if the certificates are valid, the PSCO will carry out a general examination of the vessel.** Provided that his general impression and visual observations onboard confirm a good standard maintenance, the PSCO will generally confine the inspection to reported or observed deficiencies, if any. **It is therefore very important that your vessel should not only be well maintained but have a good cosmetic appearance throughout including in its accommodation in order to avoid more detailed and time-consuming inspections.**
  - if the PSCO has **"clear grounds"** for believing that the ship, its equipment or its crew do not meet the requirements of the Conventions (i.e. they do not correspond substantially with the particulars of the Certificates), he will proceed to carry out a **more detailed inspection.** **At this stage, we recommend that Master's request the**

**PSCO to explain such “clear grounds”.** For your guidance, “clear grounds” to conduct a more detailed inspection include any of the following:

- the absence of principal equipment or arrangements required by the Conventions
- a certificate or certificates are clearly invalid
- evidence that documents required by Conventions e.g. manual, logs etc are missing, incomplete, not maintained or falsely maintained
- evidence from the PSCO’s general impressions and observations that serious hull or structural deterioration or deficiencies exist.
- evidence from the PSCO’s general impression and observations that serious deficiencies exist in safety, pollution prevention or navigational equipment
- information or evidence that the crew are not familiar with essential shipboard operations
- indications that key crew members may not be able to communicate with each other or with other persons onboard
- the emission of false distress alerts not followed by proper cancellation procedures
- reports or complaints that a ship appears to be substandard

3.3 The abovementioned IMO Resolution gives guidelines for the conduct of more detailed inspections. These are dependent on the PSCO’s professional judgement and observations. However, guidelines are given for possible controls in a number of areas: the structure of the vessels, machinery spaces, conditions of assignment of load lines, life-saving appliances and fire safety, MARPOL, operations related to the aforementioned e.g. cargo operation, abandon ship drills etc.

3.4 Every non-compliance with the relevant regulations is a deficiency, but the PSCO has to assess whether the deficiencies are sufficiently serious to warrant a detention. In arriving at his decision, the PSCO will take into consideration the following:

- the ship has relevant, valid documentation
- the ship has the crew required in compliance with the Minimum Safety Manning Document
- if the ship and/or crew are able to:
  - navigate safely
  - safely handle, carry and monitor the condition of the cargo
  - operate the engine room safely
  - maintain proper propulsion and steering
  - fight fires effectively

- abandon ship safely and effect rescue
- prevent pollution
- maintain adequate stability
- maintain adequate watertight integrity
- communicate in distress situations
- provide safe and healthy conditions onboard
- the deficiencies identified in the relevant Conventions and/or Codes which are considered to be of such a serious nature that they may warrant the detention of the ship

#### 4. Detentions

4.1 In the event that the PSCO decides that the deficiency or deficiencies warrant a detention he:

- must explain clearly to the Master the findings of the inspection and the corrective action required so as to ensure that the report of inspection is clearly understood.
- must issue to the Master a legible and comprehensible report of inspection before leaving the ship
- in the event of a disagreement, he must advise the Master of the complaints procedure in place in the event that the disagreement cannot be resolved within a reasonable time. Also, he must advise the Master of the right of appeal and the relevant procedures in the case of a detention.

4.2 **A Port State is obliged to inform a Flag State of the detention of any of its vessels. However, it is often the case that we hear/read of a detention after the event and are therefore often deprived of the opportunity of assisting the Master and Owners. Therefore, Owners/Operators/Masters of Belize-registered vessels are hereby kindly requested to notify IMMARBE's Head Office in Belize City immediately upon being notified by a PSCO that their vessel is being detained.** This will enable us, if necessary, to appoint a General Safety Inspector (GSI) in order to assist you and to take such other measures as may be warranted to ensure corrective actions e.g. requesting the attendance of the vessel's Recognized Organization (Classification Society/other) as well as to object to a detention in case there are grounds for us to do so. Such communication should be addressed to IMMARBE's Technical Department at Head Office whose contact details are:

IMMARBE

Technical Department

Suite 204, Marina Towers, Newtown Barracks

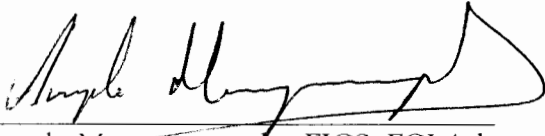
Belize City, Belize, C.A.

Tel: +501 223 5026 / 5031 / 5047

Fax: +501 223 5070 / 5048 / 5087

Email: [immarbe@btl.net](mailto:immarbe@btl.net)

Finally, if you have any queries or suggestions for the reduction of PSC detentions, kindly do not hesitate to contact us. **In the meantime, we look to you to ensure that your vessels are in all respects compliant at all times, in the interests of the safety of your crew, cargo/passengers and the environment as well as the reputation of your vessel, its Owners/Operators and that of our Administration.**



Angelo Mouzouropoulos FICS, FCI Arb.  
Director General



---

Libardo Brú BSc, MSc  
Technical Manager