

Merchant Marine Notice

MMN-21-001r2

Title: CHANGE OF STATUS REQUIREMENTS

To: Deputy Registrars, Ship Owners, ISM Operators, Recognized Organizations, Recognized Security Organizations, Shipping Agents, General Safety Inspectors

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REFERENCE

- **SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 19-1** regarding Long-Range Identification and Tracking of Ships (LRIT).
- **SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 19.2.4** regarding Automatic Identification System (AIS).
- **Resolution MSC.263(84)** Revised Performance Standards and Functional Requirements for the Long-Range Identification and Tracking of Ships.
- **Resolution A.1106(29)** Revised Guidelines for the Onboard Operational Use of Shipborne Automatic Identification System (AIS).
- **SN/Circ.227** Guidelines for the installation of a Shipborne Automatic Identification System (AIS).
- **High Seas Fishing Act, 2013 (No. 26 of 2013).**
- **High Seas Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Regulations, 2014 (No. 29 of 2014).**

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform all concerned parties of the requirements for change of status of a Belize-registered vessel from operational to maintenance, dry-docking, repairs, or laid-up.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Change of Status
The formal process by which a Belize-registered vessel transitions from operational status to maintenance, dry-docking, repairs, or laid-up, as recognized by IMMARBE.
- 2.2 Operational Status
A condition in which a vessel is actively engaged in navigation, trade, or fishing activities and is fully compliant with all statutory and regulatory requirements.

2.3 Laid UP

A temporary condition in which a Belize-registered vessel is withdrawn from active service and is not engaged in navigation or commercial operations. Laid-up status may be categorized as follows:

2.3.1 Hot Lay-Up

A condition where the vessel remains in a state of readiness for rapid reactivation. Key characteristics include:

- a. Vessel is moored or anchored in a secure location.
- b. Essential machinery and systems remain operational.
- c. May maintain full crew complement or a reduced but adequate crew to ensure safety, security, and maintenance.
- d. Compliance with LRIT, AIS, and/or VMS requirements is maintained unless otherwise authorized.
- e. Reactivation can typically occur within a short timeframe (e.g., days to weeks).

2.3.2 Cold Lay-Up

A condition where the vessel is placed in long-term inactivity and is not intended for immediate reactivation. Key characteristics include:

- a. Vessel is securely moored or docked, often in a designated lay-up facility.
- b. Most or all machinery and systems are shut down.
- c. Minimal or no crew is maintained onboard.
- d. Vessel may be declassified or have certificates suspended depending on RO procedures.
- e. Reactivation requires a longer lead time and may involve inspections and re-certification.

2.3.3 Warm Lay-Up

A warm lay-up is something between a hot and a cold lay-up. It sees crewing reduced and maintenance also reduced, but not to the same level as a cold lay-up.

- a. Vessel is moored or anchored in a secure location.
- b. Essential machinery and systems remain operational.
- c. A reduced but adequate crew to ensure safety, security, and maintenance.
- d. Compliance with LRIT, AIS, and/or VMS requirements is maintained unless otherwise authorized.
- e. Vessel may be declassified or have certificates suspended depending on RO procedures.

2.4.1 Dry-Docking

The process of placing a vessel in a dry dock for inspection, maintenance, or repairs below the waterline.

2.4.2 Maintenance

Routine or scheduled activities carried out to preserve the vessel's operational condition, including servicing of machinery, equipment, and systems.

2.4.3 Repairs

Corrective actions taken to restore the vessel or its components to a functional state due to damage, malfunction, or wear.

2.4.4 Statement of Authorization

An official document issued by IMMARBEL authorizing the vessel to change its status from operational to maintenance, dry-docking, repairs, or laid up, in accordance with Directive 9 on this notice.

2.4.5 LRIT (Long-Range Identification and Tracking)

A system used for the global identification and tracking of ships, required under international maritime regulations.

2.4.6 AIS (Automatic Identification System)

A tracking system used on ships and by vessel traffic services for identifying and locating vessels by electronically exchanging data with nearby ships and shore stations.

2.4.7 VMS (Vessel Monitoring System)

A satellite-based system used primarily for monitoring the location and activity of fishing vessels to ensure compliance with fisheries regulations.

3. APPLICATION

3.1 This Merchant Marine Notice applies to all Belize-registered vessels changing their status from operational to dry-docking, maintenance, repairs, or laid-up.

3.2 Exceptions:

The following vessels are excluded from the provisions of this notice:

- a. Non-propelled vessels
- b. Newly registered vessels with the conditions “Not Valid for Navigation”

4. GENERAL

4.1 All Belize-registered vessels intending to change their status from operational to dry-docking, under repair, maintenance or laid-up shall notify IMMARBEL’s Technical Department of this intention, including the period required under the new status. For fishing vessels, this notification should also be copied to the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) at info@bhsfu.gov.bz.

4.2 Any Belize-registered vessels authorized for the above-mentioned *Change of Status* must be provided with a *Statement of Authorization* in accordance with Directive 9 “**Making an application**” before the actual change in status.

4.3 Failure to notify IMMARBEL’s Technical Department and/or the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU), as appropriate, will result in the vessel being considered as operating normally.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Organization (RO) responsible for Statutory, ISM, ISPS and MLC certifications, and inquire about their procedures for *change of status* to avoid suspension or cancellation of the vessel's certification.
- 5.2 The above-mentioned procedures must be followed during the period needed for maintenance, dry-docking, repairs, or laid up.
- 5.3 Failure to comply with all procedures set by the RO for changing status may lead to serious non-compliance with national requirements and may be considered grounds for disciplinary measures under the authority of the Merchant Ships (Registration) Act, Chapter 236 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020 and the Registration of Merchant Ships (Disciplinary) Regulations, Statutory Instrument No. 56 of 1999.

6. DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

- 6.1 Failure to adhere to the requirements outlined in this Notice may result in disciplinary action as deemed appropriate by IMMARBE. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. or revocation of the vessel's certification.
 - b. Imposition of fines or penalties.
 - c. Restrictions on the vessel's operations or trading activities.
 - d. Other legal actions as specified under the Belize Merchant Ships (Registration) Act, (in its latest revision), and Statutory Instrument 56 of 1999 (as revised).

7. STATEMENT OF AUTHORIZATION

- 7.1 Every Belize-flagged vessel wishing to change its status from operational to maintenance, dry-docking, repairs, or laid-up shall apply for a Statement of Authorization in accordance with Directive 9, "Making an Application."
- 7.2 This Authorization is subject to confirmation that the vessel will be safely moored or dry-docked and provided with adequate crew in the case of a hot layup.
- 7.3 In addition, the vessel shall comply with all RO requirements and procedures for change in status to avoid suspension of class.

8. MINIMUM SAFE MANNING

- 8.1 During dry-docking, repairs, or maintenance, the existing Minimum Safe Manning Certificate will remain in force.
- 8.2 If an operator wishes to reduce the crew complement on board, authorization to reduce the crew must be requested from IMMARBE's Seafarers Department.
- 8.3 The Minimum Safe Manning Certificate with a reduced crew complement will be valid only for the declared laid-up period.



- 8.4 The vessel may not proceed on any voyages with a reduced crew. Instead, a notification shall be sent to the Administration (Technical and Seafarers Department) and the RO to reactivate the vessel.

9. LRIT, AIS and VM

- 9.1 LRIT, AIS and VMS (for fishing or fishing-related vessels) must be fully operational during the maintenance, dry-docking, repairs, or laid-up period.
- 9.2 If the LRIT, AIS and VMS (for fishing or fishing-related vessels) need to be deactivated or switched off during the maintenance, dry-docking, repairs, or laid-up period, immediate notification to IMMARBE's Technical Department must be made in order to authorize such action.
- 9.3 Failure to comply with items 9.1 and 9.2 will be considered in contravention with our MMN-24-006 concerning Long-Range Identification and Tracking System (LRIT), the Automatic Identification System (AIS), and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) - Compliance Requirements for Belize Flagged Ships.

10. MAKING AN APPLICATION

- 10.1 To issue a Statement of Authorization for the change of status, the Owner/Operator shall submit, through its Designated Office or Deputy Registrar, in accordance with the procedures outlined in section 5 of MMN-19-002 (in its latest version) concerning Requirements for the issuance of Technical Certificates, the following:
- A complete Application Form (TDF-006) addressing the change of status, location of the vessel, crew particulars, and the period needed.
 - A written statement from the shipyard/port confirming that the vessel will be in their custody.
 - For fishing vessels, in addition to the above, a Letter of Confirmation duly signed and stamped by the shipyard/port.
 - A statement from the vessel's RO confirming that they will have no inconvenience with the change of status of the vessel.
 - Confirmation that LRIT, AIS, and/or VMS will be operational during this period.
 - If LRIT, AIS, and/or VMS need to be deactivated or switched off, the operators, via their designated office, must provide reasons for deactivation of these systems.
 - If there is an intention to reduce the crew complement, a request for a new Minimum Safe Manning Certificate shall be made along with the application for Change of Status.
 - Upon collection of all the above, the Designated Office or Deputy Registrar shall apply for the issuance of a Statement of Authorization to IMMARBE's Technical Department at technicalservices@immarbe.com to ensure the request is processed correctly and the Technical Certificate is issued appropriately.



11. REACTIVATION REQUIREMENTS

- 11.1 Any vessel previously granted permission for Change of Status and wishing to return to operational status must notify the Administration of this intent via IMMARBE's Technical Department at technicalservices@immarbe.com.
- 11.2 For fishing vessels, this notification should also be copied to the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) at info@bhsfu.gov.bz.
- 11.3 No operator may allow their vessel to proceed to sea without first reactivating the LRIT, AIS, and/or VMS, as applicable.
- 11.4 The Operator must comply with all RO requirements for reactivation of vessel certificates and verification of compliance with LRIT, AIS, and/or VMS, as appropriate.
- 11.5 FEES
- 11.6 The applicable fees will be in accordance with MMN-19-003 Fees Applicable for the Issuance of Technical Certificates by IMMARBE.

12. ACTIONS REQUESTED

- 12.1 The Administration encourages all Shipowners, Operators, Deputy Registrars, Recognized Organizations, and Recognized Security Organizations to review and comply with the contents of this Notice and to ensure that its provisions are enforced on vessels registered with IMMARBE.

We look forward to your cooperation and assistance.

This notice was issued in Belize City, Belize, on 19 October 2025.

Eng. Eduardo Simon
Director of Technical and Seafarer
Services
IMMARBE

For: Mr. Paul Gersok
Managing Director
IMMARBE

Any queries related to this Notice shall be directed to inspections@immarbe.com; technicalservices@immarbe.com

