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CIRCULAR

Vanuatu – STCW Certificate Endorsements

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Notice to: Ship Owners / Managers / Operators

The Vanuatu International Shipping Registry (VISR) has issued [Circular #27](#) confirming that:

- STCW endorsements are mandatory for Vanuatu-flagged seagoing ships where STCW requires them; and
- All required certificates must be available on board for immediate inspection in a valid and verifiable form, whether electronic (e-signed/QR-verifiable) or original hard copy, depending on the document type and issuing authority.

Points to Note:

Key requirement – STCW endorsements are mandatory (where applicable)

Where a Master, officer, or radio operator serving on a Vanuatu-flagged seagoing ship holds a Certificate of Competency (CoC) or other STCW certificate issued by another STCW Party that requires recognition by Vanuatu, the seafarer must hold a valid Vanuatu endorsement issued by the Maritime Administrator.

On-board availability of documents for inspection (electronic or original)

Owners, managers, and Masters must ensure that all required certificates and documents are available on board for immediate inspection at any time, including during PSC inspections.

VISR-issued documents (including endorsements)

VISR-issued endorsements and certificates may be held electronically, provided they are:

- e-signed and verifiable (e.g., via QR code/verification reference); and

- accessible on board at all times, including when internet access is unavailable.

Mandatory practice:

- The vessel must keep an offline stored copy of the e-certificate(s) on board (e.g., on the ship's computer and one backup device).
- A printed copy is strongly recommended as a contingency.

Certificates issued by other Administrations / third parties (foreign CoCs, medicals, training certificates)

These must be available in the format required by the issuing authority and accepted for verification by PSC:

- If the issuing Administration provides an official e-certificate with verifiable features, it may be carried electronically;
- If the issuing Administration issues paper originals, the vessel should carry the original on board (or certified copies where permitted by that Administration). The vessel must be able to demonstrate authenticity immediately.

Minimum checklist (as applicable to vessel/crew)

Owners/managers/Masters must ensure the following are available on board in a valid and verifiable form (as applicable):

- STCW CoCs / CoPs for the capacity served;
- Required STCW training certificates (e.g., BST, advanced fire, survival craft, security, medical, etc., as applicable);
- Vanuatu endorsements attesting recognition (where required);
- Medical fitness certificates (as applicable);
- Safe Manning / Minimum Safe Manning document (as applicable); and
- Any other statutory documentation applicable to the vessel's type and trade.

Transitional / processing situations

Where an endorsement application has been submitted and is under processing, the Maritime Administrator may, in exceptional circumstances and at the Administration's discretion, issue temporary written confirmation or an interim authorization/receipt. If such temporary confirmation is issued:

- it must be carried on board; and
- it does not replace the requirement to obtain the final endorsement promptly.

Exemptions (international convention-based only)

Circular #27 does not apply where STCW or other applicable international conventions expressly do not apply, including (as applicable):

- Warships and State vessels engaged only in governmental non-commercial service;
- Fishing vessels (to the extent STCW does not apply—note: other instruments may apply, including STCW-F where implemented);
- Pleasure yachts not engaged in trade;
- Wooden ships of primitive build; and
- Vessels operating exclusively in sheltered waters/port areas or inland waters where STCW does not apply.

Owners/managers remain responsible for compliance with any alternative national requirements applicable to such vessels and their personnel.

Compliance expectations and PSC risk

Non-compliance with the requirements of Circular #27 exposes the vessel to:

- PSC deficiencies,
- delay,
- increased inspection targeting, and
- possible detention, particularly in the Paris MoU region.

Severe penalties for non-compliance

The Maritime Administrator may impose severe administrative penalties for non-compliance, including (as appropriate):

- Substantial monetary fines;
- Refusal to issue, renew, or validate endorsements and/or related documentation;
- Suspension or withdrawal of endorsements;
- Restrictions on registry services and/or vessel status; and
- Escalation to further enforcement action where non-compliance is repeated, deliberate, or causes reputational harm to the Vanuatu flag.

Act now

Ship Owners/Managers/Operators are to take note of the contents of Circular N#27 and be guided accordingly.