

**INSTRUCTIONS**  
**concerning**  
**The Swedish Transport Agency Regulations**  
**(TSFS 2009:3)**  
**on**  
**Medical Certificate for Seafarers**



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## **Instructions concerning the Swedish Transport Agency Regulations (TSFS 2009:3) on medical certificate for seafarers**

### **Medical examination – full and limited examination**

In these instructions seafarers are defined as anyone who holds a position on board a merchant or fishing vessel, irrespective of whether they are employees and irrespective of size of vessel.

According to the Work Environment Ordinance (1977:1166) a doctor, who learns of illnesses that may be connected with working on a vessel, must report this to the Swedish Transport Agency. It is important that the Swedish Transport Agency is alerted in this situation, especially if the suspected health risks have not previously been generally known. The doctor's duty to report could be valuable, for example, if the case concerns a seafarer working on a vessel that is transporting chemicals or if a seafarer has been caused a hearing impairment by noise. The doctor should de-identify personal details in the report in order to avoid violating the personal integrity of the individual in question. The Swedish Transport Agency may, if necessary, request additional information in order to be able to investigate the work environment effect in any given case.

The Swedish Mustering of Seafarers Act (1983:929) states that in order to be permitted to take up a position on board a merchant vessel, the seafarer must not be unsuitable for the position or profession due to his/her health. The seafarer must provide a medical certificate stating that his/her health forms no impediment to working in such a position.

If, in his/her health declaration, it is stated that the seafarer has undertaken a full medical examination previously, he/she should be asked about its results. The date of the previous examination should be paid special attention, if less than two years have passed since it was carried out and it may be suspected that another doctor has previously assessed that the seafarer could not go to sea in the position in question.

The Swedish Mustering of Seafarers Act (1983:929) also states that a medical examination may be limited to examination of vision and hearing for seafarers on the merchant vessels operating only in *sheltered trade*.

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*Sheltered trade* is defined as traffic within Sweden and along the coastline, to a maximum of one nautical mile (1852 m) from a port or other location where the vessel can find protected mooring, plus traffic in Kalmar Sound and national traffic in Öresund (the Sound). Sheltered trade also includes traffic within Trade Area (Service Area) D, as defined in the Maritime Safety Ordinance (2003:438).

According to Chapter 4, Section 18 of the Maritime Safety Ordinance, crew members of all fishing vessels must fulfil vision and hearing requirements.

In the question of fishing vessels, according to the same ordinance, crew members must be able to produce a medical certificate proving that the vision and hearing requirements are fulfilled. The medical examination may be limited to vision and hearing tests only, irrespective of which area the fishing vessel is to use.

If seafarers, considering their intended service, may choose between the full and the limited medical examination, the period of validity of the two certificates may be of importance to the choice the seafarer in question makes. Please refer to Chapter 5:3.

If the seafarer is unknown to and has not been previously examined by the doctor, then the *general medical examination* should include the following as a minimum: assessment of general condition of health, weight and height check, blood pressure, heart and lungs, abdomen, assessment of skin, back and extremities plus, if considered necessary, urine and/or blood tests. The medical examination should also include an assessment of the individual's mental condition as well as the possible occurrence of alcohol or drug abuse.

If the person being examined is suffering from an illness or disability that may risk deterioration of health during service at sea, the doctor should try to assess the degree of risk. If the risk is so small that it can be assumed that the illness will not become worse or mean that the applicant would become incapable of service at sea or be assumed to be a danger to the health or safety of others on board as in e.g. infectious diseases, there is an opportunity to issue a medical certificate and at the same time refer to a special message to the master of the ship. Please refer to Chapter 5 Section 5, second paragraph.

However, if the risk is assessed as greater, a certificate stating that the individual examined may work at sea may not be issued. The doctor should then advise the person in question not to work at sea.

Other illnesses and conditions such as serious mental problems in one of the crew may cause dangers alluded to above. A medical certificate for service at sea may not be issued to anyone who, in the assessment of the doctor, is currently abusing alcohol or drugs.

## Tuberculosis

If the medical certificate applies to service in *unrestricted trade* a tuberculosis examination should be carried out.

If the medical certificate applies to service in *restricted trade*<sup>1</sup> a tuberculosis examination should be carried out if the doctor considers it necessary.

**1. Tuberculosis anamnesis.** The seafarer should be asked about any previous tuberculosis history, previous or current contact with a person suffering from tuberculosis or stays in a country with a high rate of tuberculosis. In this connection attention should be paid to the information in the seafarer's health declaration on previous BCG vaccinations (Bacille Calmette-Guérin) and any health examinations concerning tuberculosis. The seafarer should also be asked whether he has suffered from any symptoms in the form of long-term coughs, coughing up, weight loss, night sweats or unexplained fever conditions.

**2. Tuberculin test** (*Mantoux with PPD RT23 2 TU, or Rhoditest®*).

Tuberculin tests should normally be carried out on individuals who are *beginners* in the seagoing profession or who are undergoing a full medical examination in order to obtain a medical certificate for seafarers (unrestricted trade). If the tuberculin reaction is positive (Mantoux  $\geq 6$  mm or Rhoditest®  $\geq 2$  mm) and the person has not previously been BCG vaccinated, he/she should be referred to a tuberculosis unit. If the tuberculin reaction is negative then the doctor should offer a BCG vaccination from a tuberculosis unit. It is not necessary to check the results of this vaccination. Tuberculin testing is not carried out if less than three years have passed since the person's latest test.

*In later, regular health checks* routine tuberculin testing will not be carried out.

Seafarers who are tuberculin negative when first employed should, in connection with the offer of a BCG vaccination, be made aware that no repeated routine checks concerning tuberculosis will be made during their period of service, and that they should themselves recognise if they are suffering from any of the symptoms mentioned in Point 1 and if necessary apply for medical care from a doctor without delay.

**3. Chest X-ray.** *People who have not been BCG vaccinated, who are new to the seagoing profession or are undergoing a full examination for the first time* in order to obtain a medical certificate for unrestricted trade, should have their lungs X-rayed even if they are free of symptoms. If such an examination has been successfully undertaken

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<sup>1</sup> Restricted trade means trade in Europe north of Brest. Trade in Europe is defined in the Swedish Ordinance (2007:237) on competence for seafarers. See Chapter 3, section 2, the Swedish Transport Agency's regulations (TSFS 2009:3) on medical certificate to seafarers.

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during the previous two year period this will be accepted, provided the person is free of the symptoms of tuberculosis.

At later, periodic health examinations chest X-rays are not carried out on a routine basis. If the seafarer is tuberculin negative and refuses a BCG vaccination, a chest X-ray every *sixth* year, or if symptoms appear, is to be recommended.

## **Assessment of fitness for service**

### *Assessment of fitness for service in general*

When assessing a person's health and its influence on their working ability etc. for service at sea, the doctor should place the performance ability of the person being examined in relation to his/her intended position onboard. If there are any illnesses/conditions present the doctor should try to assess whether there may be a risk for acute illness or gradual deterioration of the person's health when serving at sea. Please note that similar requirements have been especially underlined as concerns injury or illness to hearing and sight organs.

When assessing fitness for service the doctor should take special notice of the fact that on vessels which are far from port, crew members generally have to rely on the limited medical care resources onboard. An illness that requires long term treatment with a certain medicine may form a problem for service at sea . This applies if the condition is of the type that health could deteriorate rapidly if medication was to be interrupted through, for example, running out of or losing medicine during a long sea trip.

Any doctor who feels insecure on the conditions of the service in question may consult the Swedish Transport Agency's representative doctor. Contact can be made via [sjofart.lakarintyg@transportstyrelsen.se](mailto:sjofart.lakarintyg@transportstyrelsen.se) or by using a touch tone telephone, +46 (0)11 19 10 40. Any doctor, who feels that he/she is unable to take a decision on a seafarer's fitness for service may, in individual cases, recommend examination by another doctor working in a specialised area. The doctor should also consider the opportunities of redeployment, adaptation of position or rehabilitation of seafarers with some type of working disability. It is part of the duties of occupational health care, health and safety committees and employer HR activities to work with such issues.

### *Assessment of certain illnesses as concerns fitness for service*

#### *Chronic infectious disease*

Infectious diseases that are dangerous to society as stated in the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act (2004:168) in their infectious phase most often prevent service at sea . This group includes, for example, salmonella and tuberculosis. If communicable diseases have been treated and their infection level is very low, service at sea could be considered. This should be determined by the doctor, preferably in consultation with the patient's own doctor or, when applicable, with the communicable diseases doctor.

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HIV infection does not normally prevent service at sea, on the condition that the patient's life style does not expose others to risk of infection. It is vital that everyone who travels abroad is well briefed on high risk areas for HIV/Aids, methods of infection, risk behaviour, prevention etc. In connection with the medical examination, the doctor should inform the seafarer about this issue and offer or encourage the patient to take an HIV test if there is a risk of infection as well as informing the seafarer on risks and protective measures linked to the HIV infection.

*Metabolic disorders*

More serious endocrinal illnesses such as manifest hyperthyreosis (increased thyroid gland activity) or Addison's Disease, may prevent service at sea. Treated and well adjusted hypothyreosis (too low levels of thyroid activity) is, however, not a hindrance.

*Diabetes*

Diabetes is, in many cases, an illness that prevents service at sea. However, a seafarer already active in the profession who becomes diabetic may be permitted to remain in the business, if the illness is well under control. Cases that require insulin and cases with serious circulatory complications generally mean that the seafarer should only undertake service in restricted trade.

*Cardio vascular diseases (including hypertension)*

Cardiovascular diseases with serious affects on heart or kidney function may prevent service at sea.

*Respiratory or lung diseases*

Diseases of the respiratory organs such as chronic bronchitis, emphysema and asthma with serious disability risk for acute deterioration may prevent service at sea.

*Dermatitis*

Recurring or chronic eczema may prevent service at sea. Special attention should be paid to skin conditions that may be negatively affected by strong sunlight, contact with salt water, oils, solvents or similar. Psoriasis of the less severe type with no signs of effects on general health generally does not prevent service in unrestricted trade.

*Gastrointestinal disorders*

Disorder in the digestive organs such as recurrent stomach ulcers with complications, gall stones with risk of recurrent gall stone attacks or hernias with obvious risk of strangulation, may prevent service at sea.

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*Psychological problems (including alcoholism, drug addiction, nerve problems, eating disorders)*

Psychological conditions showing psychotic symptomatology plus serious forms of neuroses most often prevent service at sea . In case of a disorder, in many cases service in a certain position only and/or restricted trade can be considered. See Chapter 3, Section 2.

Also other disorders e.g. serious mental disturbance in a crew member may cause dangers such as those described in Chapter 3, Sections 1a) and b).

If, in the doctor's opinion, a seafarer is currently abusing alcohol or drugs he/she is not considered suitable for service at sea .

*Musculoskeletal disorder*

Disorder in the joints or muscles with serious mobility limitations may prevent service at sea . When making this assessment, the actual working position in question must be taken into consideration.

*Congenital disorder*

Currently no instructions available.

*Urinary tract or kidney disease (also prostate conditions)*

Kidney diseases with severely impaired kidney function or emptying barriers in the urinary tract due to e.g. proven urinary stones (stones in the urethra) or swollen prostate, may prevent service at sea .

*Blood diseases*

Currently no instructions available.

*Neurological illnesses*

Illnesses of the central nervous system, such as MS, may prevent service at sea . Similarly epilepsy with brief seizure-free periods prevents service at sea . Usually there must be a two-year seizure-free period before service in unrestricted trade.

*Serious cranium or brain injury causing more than 30 minutes of unconsciousness*

Residues of cranium or brain injuries (may also apply to thrombosis) may prevent service at sea .

*Eye or ear disease*

Eye diseases with risk of progressive sight impairment may prevent service at sea . If it is suspected that the seafarer is suffering from an illness/condition or injury to the sight or hearing organs this may prevent service at sea .

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*Tumour illnesses*

Currently no instructions available.

*Other (chronic or serious) illness*

Currently no instructions available.

*Bodily injury*

Currently no instructions available.

*Protection against tuberculosis*

In some cases there may be an increased risk of tuberculosis infection for seafarers. This may apply if the seafarer will be visiting a potential infection area or if someone else in the crew has recently visited an infection area. Information on relevant areas is provided by the National Board of Health and Welfare.

**Limitation of the trade area**

If the doctor considers that even service in restricted trade is too extensive due to the seafarer's health condition, but that the seafarer can serve in a further restricted trade this should be stated in the medical certificate, e.g. "ferry traffic Sweden–Germany".

**Vision and hearing requirements**

*Vision*

At the eye test, visual acuity is to be determined in a room with normal lighting and no blinding light sources in the visual field. This examination is to be carried out using a well and evenly illuminated sight chart at a distance of 5 m, or with the help of a mirror at a distance of 2.5 m with the chart located above the head of the person being examined. The seafarer must be able to read all the letters in the row that states the relevant visual acuity.

The visual field is tested using Donders' Confrontation Method on each eye separately, and testing of each visual quadrant. If the anamnesis or the ophthalmological examination arouses suspicions of visual field defect, this should lead to a perimetric examination.

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In order to be assessed as having sufficient sight, the seafarer must fulfil the following requirements:

<i>Group</i>	<i>Position (group) in medical certificate</i>	<i>Including</i>	<i>Requirements</i>
1	<i>deck – safe manning</i>	– master – first mate – helmsman – lookout – member of safe manning, belonging to deck group	a) the binocular acuity must amount to at least 0.8 with or without corrective glasses, and to at least 0.2 without corrective glasses, b) the visual field of both eyes must be normal when tested using Donder's method, and c) colour sense must be normal when tested according to Section 4
2a	<i>deck – not in safe manning</i>	– other personnel in deck group – radio telephony personnel	the binocular acuity must amount to at least 0.5 with or without corrective glasses
2b	<i>engine room</i>	engine room personnel	the binocular acuity must amount to at least 0.5 with or without corrective glasses
3	<i>others</i>	catering personnel/others	the binocular acuity must amount to at least 0.2 with or without corrective glasses

For a seafarer who is not yet 20 years of age and who is to go on service at sea in a position in Group 1 above the following applies: in addition to what is stated as a requirement in the table, binocular acuity must amount to at least 0.8 without corrective glasses and any hyperopia may not exceed 3.0 dioptres in either eye.

Also for seafarers in Group 2, the visual field and colour sense are to be stated in the medical certificate if the medical examination shows that the seafarer otherwise possesses sufficient vision and hearing ability to become a helmsman or a lookout.

A seafarer who achieves the stated levels of visual acuity only with the help of corrective glasses when using such glasses at the test is permitted, must use glasses or contact lenses when on duty. In such cases the necessity of wearing these essential glasses or contact lenses when on duty must be written into the medical certificate.

If the seafarer, in order to achieve the stipulated acuity of vision, uses glasses with shafts that do not fully encircle the back of his/her ears then these glasses must be equipped with a fastening device that prevents them from falling off during violent movement.

If the seafarer is obliged to wear glasses or contact lenses while on duty then a reserve pair of glasses and, when necessary, an extra fastening device must be taken onboard.

At least one of the following tests must be used to determine colour sense: Ishihara, Boström-Kugelberg or Dvorine.

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If the seafarer can produce a special colour sense certificate that is not more than four years old, the colour sense does not need to be tested as long as the seafarer does not provide any information which may motivate a new test. Where a medical certificate is required for vision and hearing ability only, however, the special colour sense certificate may only be a maximum of two years old.

### *Hearing ability*

In order to be assessed as having sufficient hearing ability, the seafarer must fulfil the following requirements:

<i>Group</i>	<i>Position (group) in medical certificate</i>	<i>Including</i>	<i>Requirements</i>
1	<i>deck – safe manning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– master</li> <li>– first mate</li> <li>– helmsman</li> <li>– lookout</li> <li>– member of safe manning, belonging to deck group</li> </ul>	When testing each ear separately the seafarer must be able to catch normal conversation at a distance of 4 m and normal whispering at a distance of 1 m, in both cases without a hearing aid or visual support
2a	<i>deck – not in safe manning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– other personnel in deck group</li> <li>– radio telephony personnel</li> </ul>	When testing each ear separately the seafarer must be able to catch normal conversation at a distance of 4 m and normal whispering at a distance of 1 m, in both cases without a hearing aid or visual support
2b	<i>engine room</i>	engine room personnel	When testing each ear separately the seafarer must be able to catch normal conversation at a distance of 2 m and normal whispering at a distance of 1 m, in both cases without a hearing aid or visual support
3	<i>others</i>	catering personnel/others	The seafarer must, in one ear, clearly catch normal conversation at a distance of 1 m without a hearing aid or visual support

The hearing ability of a seafarer, who is to take up a position for the first time in Groups 1 or 2 above, must be examined using pure tone audiometry. If the hearing ability is to be assessed as satisfactory the person examined must catch signals at:

- a) frequencies 500, 1 000 and 2 000 hertz; average level of any hearing impairment at these frequencies (tone average level) may not exceed 25 decibels in either ear.
- b) frequencies 3 000, 4 000 and 6 000 hertz; average level of any hearing impairment at these frequencies (tone average level) may not exceed 30 decibels in either ear.

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The Swedish Transport Agency may, after application, grant temporary postponement of the requirement for examination by pure tone audiometer. In order to grant such a postponement, hearing ability must be the equivalent of what is required for Groups 1 and 2 above.

*Pure tone audiometry*

In the certificate it is assumed that pure tone audiometric check has resulted in a special pure tone audiogram. This audiogram should not have been taken more than two months previous to the issuing of the medical certificate in accordance with Swedish Transport Agency instructions.

It is recommended that every seafarer whose work implies risk for hearing impairment should, through the auspices of his/her employer, be offered the opportunity to undertake a periodic, regular hearing check in the form of pure tone audiometry. Such an examination should be carried out every two years if a seafarer has, since the previous medical examination including pure tone audiometer, worked in a workplace with a steady noise level of 80 decibels (A) or above, or who has been exposed to other noise that may be suspected to be injurious to hearing such as work with a rust removal machine.

Examinations at shorter intervals are motivated if changes to hearing ability, difficulties in understanding etc. have been noted or if the seafarer has suffered from an illness that has affected the hearing organs since his/her last medical examination. In addition, examination with a pure tone audiometer should be undertaken in connection with employment or relocation to a position that may bring risk for hearing impairment.

**Periods of validity**

The *longest period of validity for a medical certificate concerning a full examination* is stated in Section 19 of the Swedish Mustering of Seafarers Act (1983:929): "A medical certificate applies for a maximum period of two years, or if the seafarer is under the age of 18 years at the time of examination, a maximum of one year."

The *longest period of validity for a medical certificate concerning a vision and hearing ability only* is stated in Section 19 of the Swedish Mustering of Seafarers Act and in Chapter 5, Section 4 of the Maritime Safety Ordinance (2003:438) i.e. that this certificate is valid for a maximum of four years.

**Health declaration**

The Government Ordinance on Medical Certificate for Seafarers (1979:38) states that seafarer must, on his/her honour, assert that the information provided in his/her health declaration, to the best of their knowledge, is fully in accordance with the truth. It also stated that such a declaration is not necessary if the medical examination concerns vision and hearing only. Neither is it necessary to submit a health declaration when the medical examination concerns only a certain illness or injury which has temporarily impaired the fitness for service.

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## Cancelled medical certificate

If, from the health declaration or in any other manner, it becomes clear that the seafarer's previous medical certificate for seafarers has been declared invalid and cancelled by the Swedish Transport Agency, which may occur according to the Swedish Mustering of Seafarers Act, the doctor should always:

- a) Contact the Swedish Transport Agency to obtain information concerning the circumstances of the cancellation, and
- b) If the doctor assesses that the seafarer may, according to his/her health status, return to sea, after permission from the seafarer concerned state the reasons for this in a notification to the Swedish Transport Agency.

Decisions concerning cancellation of medical certificate for individuals are available from the Swedish Transport Agency's Seaman Register, without providing information on the nature of the illness concerned.

## Additional certificates

The Swedish Mustering of Seafarers Act establishes that if a seafarer's health has deteriorated considerably during the course of the medical certificate's period of validity, the ship owner or master of the vessel may require a seafarer to produce a new medical certificate before taking up a position. This regulation is applicable if, for example, the seafarer previously left his/her position due to illness i.e. medical discharge. Injuries due to accidents are included in this regulation.

The ship owner or master of the vessel may require a new medical certificate from a seafarer concerning fitness for service within a shorter period than that generally proscribed, before the seafarer is once again allowed to serve at sea. *This additional certificate should normally be issued by the doctor who treated the illness or injury.*

Seafarers do not need to submit a health declaration when the medical examination only concerns a certain illness or injury which has temporarily impaired the fitness for service. The limited nature of the medical examination must be stated on a new certificate where applicable parts only are filled in. This may mean, for example, that information on vision and hearing is omitted and that the fitness for service assessment's initial sentence will be as follows:

*With reference to Chapter 5, Section 6 of the Swedish Transport Agency instructions (TSFS 2009:3) on medical examinations of seafarers I submit the following statement: "Based on the examination I have carried out concerning a certain illness or injury, which has temporarily impaired the fitness for service of the seafarer concerned according to medical certificate issued 20XX-MM-DD, I assess ..." etc.*

Maritime Department

If the seafarer wishes to obtain a medical certificate with a longer period of validity, it may instead be suitable to carry out a full health examination in order to be able to issue a full medical certificate for seafarers. In this case the health declaration must be given in accordance with the Government Ordinance on Medical Certificate for Seafarers (1979:38). Other regulations concerning full medical examination will then also apply.

### **Misplaced medical certificate**

A seafarer who misplaces his/her medical certificate before its period of validity has expired may request a replacement certificate for the remaining period of validity. Such a certificate should be issued by the doctor who issued the original certificate. This replacement certificate must state, in the period of validity box: "*Replacement certificate valid until...*".

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