
Seafarer Vision Test: Deck/Dual Career Personnel - Merchant Navy and Fishing Vessels

Notice to seafarers requiring a test of visual acuity and colour vision (seafarer vision test)

The Merchant Shipping (Training and Certification) Regulations 1997¹ and The Fishing Vessels (Certification of Deck Officers & Engineers Officers) Regulations 1984²

This Notice replaces Merchant Shipping Notice MSN 1713(M+F)

Summary

This Notice sets out the statutory visual acuity and colour vision standards for seafarers and explains the arrangements for the test to be taken at Opticians instead of Marine Offices. It sets out

- who needs a vision test
- the purpose of the test
- the vision standards
- where to take the test

Introduction

1. For the majority of seafarers visual acuity and colour vision are tested as part of the general medical examination (ENG1) and no separate certificate is needed to confirm that they meet the necessary visual standards. However, some seafarers need a separate certificate confirming that they are able to meet the statutory visual acuity and colour vision standards. This Notice introduces new arrangements whereby Opticians (optometrists) instead of Marine Offices will conduct the vision test.

Who needs a seafarer vision test

2. The following seafarers need a seafarer vision test:

- (a) a merchant navy deck department candidate applying for a certificate of competency whose UK medical fitness certificate (ENG1) issued under the Merchant Shipping (Medical Examination) Regulations 1983 was issued more than two years before the date of eligibility for issue of a first certificate of competency;
- (b) a candidate for a fishing vessel certificate of competency, deck department;

¹ SI 1997, No. 348

² SI 1984, No 1115

(c) a candidate for a certificate of competency presenting an acceptable non-UK medical certificate which does not confirm that they have met the statutory visual acuity and colour vision standard.

3. While there is no statutory requirement for prospective seafarers to have a seafarer vision test, **anyone considering a seagoing career is strongly advised to have a full sight test before beginning their training** to ensure that they can meet the standards and have no defect which might cause a subsequent problem. Visual acuity and colour vision standards for all merchant seafarers, including those in the engineering and other departments, are given in MSN 1746 (M+F) which sets out the medical and eye-sight standards for seafarers.

Purpose of the seafarer vision test

4. The purpose of the test is to ensure that the seafarer's visual acuity and colour vision are sufficiently good to undertake duties on board efficiently. In order to do this, a seafarer should be able to reach certain minimum standards of both acuity, tested by reading letters, and colour vision, tested by Ishihara plates. **These tests are only designed to check that visual acuity and colour vision meet the required standard at the time of the test.**

Vision Standards for the seafarer vision test

5. The vision standards for **all deck/dual career** personnel, merchant navy and fishing vessel, are as follows:

Basic Visual Acuity Standard - Without spectacles or contact lenses		Higher Visual Acuity Standard - With spectacles or contact lenses if needed		Colour Vision Ishihara test
Better eye	Other eye	Better eye	Other eye	
6/60	6/60	6/6	6/12	Pass Ishihara test
Vision standard for serving seafarers who become monocular				
6/60	N/A	6/6	N/A	Pass Ishihara Test

6. The Ishihara test is carried out using either 38 or 24 colour plates.

Use of aids to vision - spectacles or contact lenses

7. All deck/dual career personnel must be able to reach the basic visual acuity standard (6/60) **without** using spectacles or contact lenses. Applicants may use spectacles or contact lenses to reach the higher standard (6/6, 6/12). All applicants who pass the seafarer vision test using aids to vision should use them when on watch and should also carry with them a spare pair of spectacles or contact lenses.

Where to take the seafarer vision test

8. With effect from 1 December 1999 Marine Offices will no longer conduct the seafarer visual acuity and colour vision test. From that date any registered optometrist, usually found in most optician's, may conduct this test. A combined information leaflet, application form and seafarer vision test report (MSF4100) for completion by the optician, may be obtained from any Marine office. A list of Marine Offices is at Annex 1 of this Notice. The seafarer vision test is valid for two years.

Options for retaking the sight test following failure

9. **Visual Acuity** - If a candidate cannot reach the **basic** visual acuity standard (6/60) **without spectacles or contact lenses** he fails the seafarer vision test. A candidate who fails to reach the **higher visual acuity** standard (6/6, 6/12) may be re-tested **using spectacles or contact lenses** (or with spectacles or contact lenses with an improved prescription) **to help them reach the higher standard.**

Colour Vision - An applicant who fails the Ishihara colour vision test may arrange for their colour vision to be tested using the Holmes Wright B Lantern at one of the MCA Marine Offices that offer lantern tests, as indicated in Annex 1.

Cost of the Seafarer Vision Test

10. The fee for the seafarer vision test is determined by the optician and there is no MCA set fee. The MCA make no charge for a lantern test. However, the applicant will be expected to pay any personal costs, including transport, to attend the lantern test.

Seafarer Health and Safety Branch (MSSP3C)
The Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Bay 2/1
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

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*An executive agency of the Department of the
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THE MARITIME AND COASTGUARD AGENCY

ADDRESSES OF MARINE OFFICES

All Marine Offices can provide copies of the standard form (MSF4100) to take to any registered optometrist/ophthalmic optician for a seafarer vision test. **Marine Offices do not conduct the basic seafarer vision test. Those marked * can conduct lantern tests.**

ABERDEEN*	Marine House Blaikies Quay Aberdeen AB11 5EZ Tel: 01224 574122
BELFAST	Customs House Queens Square Belfast BT1 3ET Tel: 01232 562962
BEVERLEY (HULL)	Crosskill House Mill Lane Beverley HU17 9JB Tel: 01482 866606
CARDIFF	Oxford House Hills Street Cardiff CF1 2TD Tel: 01222 229556
DOVER	Langdon Battery Swingate Dover CT15 5NA Tel: 01304 227710
GLASGOW*	Marine House 6000 Academy Park Gower Street Glasgow G51 1TR Tel: 0141 4279400
GT. YARMOUTH	5th Floor Yarmouth House 45 Yarmouth Way Great Yarmouth Norfolk NR30 2QZ Tel: 01493 330433

LEITH	1 John's Place Leith Edinburgh EH6 7EL Tel: 0131 5545488
LIVERPOOL	Graeme House 2nd Floor Derby Square Liverpool L2 7SQ Tel: 0151 4711142
NEWCASTLE*	Government Buildings Broadway West Gosforth Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 2JL Tel: 0191 2857171
ORPINGTON KENT (LONDON)	Central Court 1B Knoll Rise Orpington Kent BR6 0JA Tel: 01689 890400
PLYMOUTH	Phoenix House Notte Street Plymouth PL1 2HF Tel: 01752 266211
SHETLAND	The Knab Knab Road Lerwick Shetland ZE1 OAX Tel: 01595 696712
SOUTHAMPTON*	Spring Place 105 Commercial Road Southampton SO15 1EG Tel: 01703 329100

