

Best Practices

*Here Are Steps **Mariners** Can Take to Better Navigate the U.S. Coast Guard Credentialing Process*

The following best practices were compiled by The American Waterways Operators based on the experience of member companies. These best practices can make the credential application and renewal process less confusing and help to ensure that your application is processed efficiently by the Coast Guard's National Maritime Center.

I. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY—YOUR LICENSE IS YOUR LIVELIHOOD

You can take steps to lessen the likelihood of lengthy credential application delays by being proactive about your health.

- Get your physical exam at least six months before your application is due and start the renewal process early. If you have a known medical condition, find out what testing or documentation is required by the Coast Guard and include this information with your application.
- If you apply early, remember to ask the NMC to delay issuance of your new credential so it becomes valid shortly before your old credential expires. This will avoid “license creep” and ensure you get the full benefit of your credential’s five-year validity period.
- Take advantage of time between required physicals to work to improve known conditions.
- Educate yourself about common medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and sleep apnea and what the Coast Guard requires if you have one of these conditions.
- Visit the NMC website (www.uscg.mil/nmc) often and sign up for the Mariner Medical listserv to receive the latest updates from the NMC. To subscribe to this and other available lists, go to <http://cgls.uscg.mil/groups.php>. To contact the NMC Mariner Information Call Center, dial 1-888-427-5662.

- Make sure to include an email and cell phone contact on your application.
- Involve your spouse and family in helping you manage your medical conditions and attain or maintain a healthy weight.

No mariner wants to be left shoreside waiting for the NMC to process their credential, and getting an early start on renewals can ensure that you, your company, and the NMC have time to work through complex issues that could lead to delays.

II. **WORK WITH YOUR EMPLOYER – THEY’RE HERE TO HELP**

Your employer is a resource to help you navigate the credential application process, so make use of any assistance they can provide.

- Company representatives can show you how to submit a complete application, put you in contact with NMC representatives to answer your more detailed questions, and recommend a doctor who is familiar with Coast Guard requirements.
- Your company can also recommend licensing consultants to further help you navigate the process.
- Consider signing a third-party release on your credential application, so that your employer can speak directly to the NMC on your behalf. This can be especially helpful when you are busy on board the vessel.
- Some companies provide opportunities for employees to improve their health by providing exercise equipment and nutrition education resources. If your company does not such resources, talk to them about it.

For more information on the AWO Working Group on Mariner Licensing & Medical Standards, please contact Jennifer Carpenter or Brian Vahey at (703) 841-9300, extensions 260 and 251, respectively, or via email at jcarpenter@vesselalliance.com or bvahey@vesselalliance.com.