
Circular 2019/0001

Use of Electronic Certificates on board Belgian Flagged Vessels

Date: 19-03-2019

To whom it may concern,

The Belgian Maritime Inspectorate hereby wants to inform all concerned parties (shipowners and managing companies, Port State Control officials, ships' crews and all other stakeholders) that starting from the 1 April 2019, the Recognised Organisations are authorized to issue statutory and class certificates under the authority of the Kingdom of Belgium for the Belgian flagged vessels electronically.

This is applicable for all Belgian flagged vessels classed with one of the following recognized organisations:

- American Bureau of Shipping (ABS),
- Bureau Veritas Marine & Offshore SAS (BV),
- DNV GL AS
- Lloyd's Register Group Ltd (LR),
- Nippon Kaiji Kyokai General Incorporated Foundation (Class NK),
- Russian Maritime Register of Shipping (RS),
- RINA Services S.p.A.

The electronic certificates issued by one of the above mentioned recognized organisations to Belgian flagged vessels must be in compliance with the requirements of FAL.5/Circ.39/Rev.2 "Guidelines for the Use of Electronic Certificates" which identifies the following features:

1. Validity and consistency with the format and content required by the relevant international convention or instrument, as applicable;
2. Protected from edits, modifications or other revisions other than those authorized by the issuer;
3. A unique tracking number used for verifications as defined in the corresponding paragraphs of these guidelines
4. A printable and visible symbol that confirms the source of issuance
5. Reliably and securely verifiable through a conveniently accessible and continuously available platform

Instructions for verifying the information contained in the electronic certificate, including confirmation of periodic endorsement, when necessary, must be available on board the ship.

Shipowners, managing companies and crews on ships that carry and use electronic certificates must ensure that the valid certificates, including all endorsements, can be presented on board whenever requested for. This can be done for example by ensuring that an internet connection is available at all times, or by keeping a local electronic copy of the certificates on board.

The management of these certificates must be controlled through the Safety Management System, as described in section 11 of the International Safety Management Code. For vessels which are not subject to the requirements of the ISM Code, the same principles of a controlled document system have to be applied for the use of the electronic certificates.

Ship owners are reminded that ships flying the Belgian flag must comply at all times with the local requirements of each specific port.

The content of this BMI Circular must be well known by the responsible crew of the vessels provided with electronic certificates. The crew must be able to present this BMI Circular whenever necessary or requested by any interested party.

The Belgian Maritime Inspectorate urges all concerned parties to accept these electronic certificates as genuine and on the same level as paper certificates.
