



International Chamber of Shipping (China) Liaison Office

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China gradually allow foreign crew change

According to various sources, the Chinese authorities have gradually allowed foreign crew change in certain Chinese ports and the first two changes have been conducted in Shanghai port and Qingdao port respectively.

The news regarding China's reopening of 10 ports for foreign crew change was firstly reported by BIMCO on 12 October 2020 (<https://www.bimco.org/news/ports/20201012-china-opens-up-10-ports-for-foreign-crew-change>). The ICS China Liaison Office had verified the news immediately after the press was published. The contacts were reluctant to expressly confirm the notification, as the Chinese authorities wanted to keep the news low profile in order to allow more time for the relevant ports to arrange the foreign crew changes. In addition, the contact also reminded that despite the central authorities have encouraged the local ports to reopen for foreign crew change, it is still up to the full discretion of the local governments of those 10 ports cities to make the final decision on a case-by-case basis whether to allow application from the vessel for change of foreign seafarers.

The 10 ports to allow for foreign crew change are, from north to south coast of China, Dalian, Tianjin, Qingdao, Shanghai, Ningbo, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Haikou. These are all major ports in China for import and export.

The following requirements should be followed to sign off foreign crew:

- comply with Chinese entry and staying regulations during the epidemic period;
- acquire a valid departing air, vessel or bus ticket;
- disembarking point has facility to arrange "point-to-point" transfer to the outbound gate within the same city;
- the ship in question has left the last foreign port in more than 14 days;
- crew on board keeps a sound health and quarantine record;
- crew change will be permitted at the designated Chinese port upon clearance by the Chinese Customs carrying out a proper quarantine checkout together with negative nucleic acid testing result; and
- the shipping company is required to rent a car to transfer the foreign crew from the disembarking point to the outbound gate-point directly within the same city, or to embark another outbound ship directly once disembarking without any further stay in China.

In addition, shipping companies should closely monitor the port's local quarantine conditions and implement a closed-loop management as per the quarantine requirements issued by the local port.

A quarantine circuit-breaker mechanism was also introduced under which a shipping company's foreign crew change operations would be suspended for 15 days if there are 5 cases tested positive cases in their ship aggregate, or suspended for 30 days if there are 10 positive tests. If there are more than 10 positive test results, the shipping company will not be allowed to operate until they pass the fresh assessment conducted by the relevant authorities.

Shanghai and Qingdao ports completed foreign crew change

On 16 October 2020 at 9:40, a vehicle carrying 3 Vietnamese crew members departed from the Luojing branch terminal, Shanghai port. The 3 foreign crew members were from MV "Adelaide", a Panamanian registered cargo vessel, which berthed on 15 October 2020. The crew was transferred to the port on 16 October at 9:20am. This is the first foreign crew change work in Mainland China since the outbreak of Covid-19.

MV "Adelaide" departed from Solomonu port on 16 September and she did not call any other overseas port within 14 days before arriving at Shanghai port. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were 3 foreign crew members who had worked on the MV "Adelaide" for more than one year, with the longest one being nearly 18 months.

On 17 October 2020, upon cooperation among different authorities, Qingdao port arranged the change of 10 foreign crew members from MV "Berlin Trader", a Liberian registered cargo vessel. The crew change was conducted for the purpose of delivery of the vessel under a sale and purchase transaction. All foreign crew members left Qingdao by taking flight to South Korea on 18 October 2020.