



Merchant Marine Notice MMN-25-006

Title: Requirements for Handling Port State Control Inspections and Detentions

To: Recognized Organizations, Ship Owners, ISM Operators, Ship Managers, Deputy Registrars

Issuance Date: 23 May 2025 **Revision No.:** N/A

MMN Superseded: MMN-23-001

1. REFERENCE

- Resolution A. 1185(33) – Procedures for Port State Control
- TD-IMM-GOB001-25 – IMMARBE Occasional Survey Program
- MMN-25-004 – Instructions to Recognized Organizations on Port State Control Detentions
- MMN-24-003 (in its latest revision) – Guidance for the issuance of Short-Term, and/or Extended Certificates by Recognized Organizations

2. REVOKED

- 2.1. MMN-23-001 – Reporting on Port State Control Inspections and Detentions

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. IMMARBE – International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize
- 3.2. RO – Recognized Organization (classification societies authorized by the flag state)
- 3.3. PSC – Port State Control
- 3.4. ISM – International Safety Management (Code)
- 3.5. SMC – Safety Management Certificate (ship-specific ISM certification)
- 3.6. DOC – Document of Compliance (company-wide ISM certification)
- 3.7. OSP – Occasional Survey Program
- 3.8. MoU – Memorandum of Understanding (regional PSC agreements like Paris MoU, Tokyo MoU)
- 3.9. PSCO – Port State Control Officer
- 3.10. MMN – Merchant Marine Notice (IMMARBE's official circulars)

4. INTRODUCTION

- 4.1. In recent years, Port State Control (PSC) detentions have negatively impacted the reputation of the Belize flag and indicate potential failures in safety, security, or environmental compliance. This notice outlines mandatory procedures for handling PSC detentions, including corrective actions, applicable penalties, and potential incentives, with the aim of ensuring compliance and promoting continuous improvement.



5. PURPOSE

- 5.1. The purpose of this notice is to establish standardized procedures for handling PSC inspections and detentions. These procedures include immediate reporting requirements, corrective actions, penalties for non-compliance, escalation measures for repeated detentions, and incentives for vessels demonstrating exemplary PSC performance.

6. APPLICATION

- 6.1. This Merchant Marine Notice applies to:
1. All Belize-flagged vessels subjected to PSC inspections or detentions
 2. Recognized Organizations (ROs)
 3. Ship Owners/Operators

7. ACTIONS REQUIRED FOR EVERY PSC INSPECTION

- 7.1. Operators must notify the Belize Administration immediately after every PSC inspection. Notification for vessels not detained should include:
- a. A copy of the PSC Report **Form A** and **Form B**;
 - b. Rectification Report (TDF-020) for each deficiency;
 - c. Root Cause Analysis and Preventive Actions;
 - d. Evidence (including clear photographs) of the rectification of each deficiency;

8. GENERAL REQUIREMENT IN CASES OF PSC DETENTION.

8.1. Immediate Notification and RO Attendance

- 8.1.1. The vessel operator must notify IMMARBE without delay following a Port State Control detention. The notification, including the PSC Report Forms A and B, must be submitted via email to inspections@immarbe.com. Concurrently, the operator must arrange for the attendance of the Recognized Organization (RO) to verify the rectification of deficiencies. The RO is required to carry out a comprehensive inspection of the vessel to identify any additional deficiencies beyond those cited in the PSC report.

8.2. ISM Code Verification

- 8.2.1. Where the PSC inspection report cites deficiencies related to the International Safety Management (ISM) Code, the Recognized Organization (RO) responsible for ISM must conduct an additional Safety Management system (SMS) audit onboard the vessel.
- 8.2.2. In cases where five or more ISM-related deficiencies are identified, the Administration may require an additional audit of the company's Document of Compliance (DOC) within 30 days.

8.3. Survey Requirements

- 8.3.1. If the date of the detention falls within a ± 3 -month window of the vessel's annual survey, the RO must conduct the annual surveys at the port of detention to the extent practicable. Should the surveys be impractical due to extenuating circumstances at the detention port, the RO must notify IMMARBE and provide a detailed schedule for their completion at the next port of call. Exceptions apply to the Safety Equipment and Radio surveys, which remain mandatory and must be completed at the detention port.



8.4. **Certificate Downgrades and Dispensation**

- 8.4.1. Where deficiencies affect the validity of statutory certificates and cannot be rectified immediately, the relevant certificate should be downgraded to a short-term certificate. The RO should contact the flag regarding these deficiencies and propose temporary arrangements and provide supporting documentation. Upon flag agreement, the RO will be granted the necessary authorization to downgrade the statutory certificate. Additionally, the vessel must be issued a dispensation letter via the vessel's designated office in accordance with the latest revision of [MMN-24-003](#).

9. **RESPONSIBILITY**

9.1. **Operators/Owners**

- 9.1.1. Vessel Operators/Owners are to immediately notify the Administration of PSC inspections and detentions, and submit the required documents.
- 9.1.2. If disputing detentions, instruct the Masters to first appeal with the PSC authority, then escalate to RO and IMMARBE where support is needed. See section 12 for further guidance.
- 9.1.3. If deficiencies cannot be rectified at the detention port, operators must apply, via their designated office, for dispensation letters as outlined in [MMN-24-003](#) (in its latest revision).
- 9.1.4. Operators/Owners are financially responsible for all costs related to inspections, surveys, audits, fines, or detentions.

9.2. **Recognized Organization (RO)**

- 9.2.1. Attend the vessel at the detention port to confirm deficiency rectification and conduct a general inspection.
- 9.2.2. Perform annual surveys if detention falls outside the ± 3 -month window for mandatory surveys.
- 9.2.3. If surveys cannot be completed, notify IMMARBE and provide a completion schedule.
- 9.2.4. Conduct an additional Safety Management Certificate (SMC) audit if ISM deficiencies are cited. For cases with more than five (5) ISM deficiencies, conduct a Document of Compliance (DOC) audit of the company within 30 days.
- 9.2.5. Downgrade affected certificates to short-term (with Flag Administration approval).
- 9.2.6. Advise operators to apply for a dispensation letter when a short-term certificate is required on board.
- 9.2.7. Submit all findings and corrective actions to IMMARBE.

9.3. **Master of the Vessel**

- 9.3.1. Lodge a formal objection with the PSCO at the time of detention if deficiencies are disputed.
- 9.3.2. Cooperate and facilitate RO access for inspections/audits and provide required documentation.
- 9.3.3. Ensure all deficiencies are addressed, even if under appeal.
- 9.3.4. Submit all required documents for PSC inspection and detention as required

10. **ESCALATION MEASURES FOR REPEATED DETENTIONS**

- 10.1. The below provides measures comprising actions to be taken by the Administration in the case of first, second, and third detentions within a 36-month period.
- 10.2. Detentions linked to critical safety failures may trigger immediate escalation, regardless of timeframes.

10.3. **First Detention**

- 10.3.1. Upon the first detention, the vessel shall be issued with a warning letter and enrolled in an Occasional Survey Program (OSP) for a duration of 24 months. Details of the OSP are outlined in IMMARBE Policy TD-IMM-GOB001-25.



10.4. **Second Detention**

- 10.4.1. A vessel detained a second time within 18 months of the first detention shall be deemed a substandard ship and summarily deleted from the registry without further penalty. If the second detention occurs between 18 and 24 months, instead of deletion, a fine of USD 5,000 shall be imposed for minor deficiencies, escalating to USD 10,000 for major or repeated violations. Furthermore, the company must conduct a DOC audit within 30 days.

10.5. **Third Detention**

- 10.5.1. Any vessel detained three times within a 36-month period, irrespective of the PSC MoU region, shall be deleted from the Belize registry without further notice or penalty.

11. **PROCESS FOR DELETION**

- 11.1. Vessel deletion shall take effect within 20 calendar days from the date of the issuance of the notice of deletion or at the next port of call, whichever is earlier.
- 11.2. Immediate deletion may be applied for detentions involving critical safety failures, falsification of documents, sanction violations, repeated ISM non-conformities, or threats to the crew safety, inter alia.
- 11.3. For immediate cancellation, the Flag State may issue a Prohibition of Sailing Notice (PSN) in tandem with the Notice of Cancellation. The local authorities at the detention port shall be provided with a copy of the PSN.
- 11.4. Every vessel being deleted shall be monitored by the Technical/Seafarer's Department monitoring division to ensure that ships do not circumvent the above conditions.

12. **APPEALS AGAINST PSC DETENTIONS**

- 12.1. If the ship's owner/operator believes a detention is unjustified, the Master must immediately submit an appeal to the PSC authority at the detention port, copying the Flag Administration and RO. The appeal must follow the procedures outlined on the relevant PSC MoU website (e.g., Tokyo MoU, Paris MoU).
- 12.2. The Master must request a written acknowledgment of the appeal from the PSC office.
- 12.3. The RO is required to review the PSC detention reports (Forms A/B) and provide comments on the deficiencies found and grounds for appeal within 14 calendar days of detention.
- 12.4. To support the appeal, the flag should be provided with inter alia:
 - a. Logs, certificates, photographs, correspondence with PSC.
 - b. A detailed statement explaining why the detention is unjustified.
 - c. Position of the RO on the appeal.
 - d. Any other documentation or evidence to support the appeal.
- 12.5. If the detention is upheld, the vessel must comply with all corrective actions per Sections 8 of this MMN.
- 12.6. No fines under Section 15 will apply if the appeal is successful.

13. **FINANCIAL INCENTIVE**

- 13.1. To encourage and reward exemplary compliance with international maritime regulations, the Belize Administration, via the Merchant Ships Registration Act regulation 15.2, offers a financial incentive for vessels that achieve high performance during Port State Control (PSC) inspections.
- 13.2. These incentives are only applicable to vessels with at least one (1) PSC inspection during the period under consideration.
- 13.3. Owners/operators of Belize-flagged vessels inspected by PSC officials that receive no more than six (6) deficiencies in a single PSC Inspection within a consecutive 12-month period may



- be eligible for a reduction on the vessel's next annual taxes, as specified in the applicable IMMARBE Fee Schedule
- 13.4. Owners/operators of Belize-flagged vessels inspected by PSC officials but receive no more than six (6) deficiencies in a single PSC Inspection within a consecutive 24-month period may be eligible for a higher reduction on the vessel's next annual taxes, as outlined in the current IMMARBE Fee Schedule.
 - 13.5. This incentive is designed to promote continuous operational excellence and adherence to the highest safety and environmental standards.
 - 13.6. The incentive applies only once per vessel for either one (12 months) or two (24+ months) consecutive calendar years within an annual tax period. To claim the reduction, the owner or operator must submit a formal request through their designated Deputy Registrar when applying for the annual tax payment. The request must include a summary of PSC inspections for the relevant period, along with copies of the PSC inspection reports, including those with zero deficiencies. The Administration reserves the right to verify the authenticity of the inspection reports with the respective Port State Control authority before approving the incentive.

14. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- 14.1. Mandatory Reporting of Ship Damage to Authorities
 - 14.1.1. Operators are reminded of the critical importance of reporting any accidental damage to their vessels, regardless of whether the damage is severe enough to warrant detention.
 - 14.1.2. In line with IMO Resolution A.1185(33) - Procedures for Port State Control, section 2.3.7, a ship typically won't be detained due to accidental damage if:
 - a. The Flag State Administration, or Recognized Organization (RO) responsible for the relevant certificate is promptly notified.
 - b. Before entering port, the master or company provides the Port State Authority with full details of the accident, the damage incurred, and confirmation of Flag State notification.
 - c. The ship undertakes appropriate remedial action to the satisfaction of the Port State Authority.
 - d. Once remedial action is complete, the Port State Authority confirms that any deficiencies posing a clear hazard to safety, health, or the environment have been rectified.

To ensure compliance and avoid potential detention, operators must notify the Flag State, Port State, RO, and Port Authority of any accidental damage to the ship.

15. PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

- 15.1. An owner/operator who fails to notify IMMARBE or the RO immediately of a PSC inspection or detention will result in a fine of USD 1,000.00.
- 15.2. Failure to notify Flag State, Port State, RO, and Port Authority of any accidental damage to the ship leading to a detention will result in a fine of USD 5,000.00
- 15.3. Other penalties listed in section 10 of this notice.




16. REQUIREMENTS

The Administration encourages all Shipowners, Operators, Deputy Registrars, and Recognized Organizations to review and comply with the contents of this Notice and to ensure that its provisions are enforced on vessels registered with IMMARBE.

IMMARBE appreciates your cooperation and assistance.

This notice was issued in Belize City, Belize on 23 May 2025.

Eng. Eduardo Simon
Director of Technical and Seafarer Services
IMMARBE



Mr. Paul Gersok
Managing Director
IMMARBE

Any queries related to this Notice shall be directed to inspections@immarbe.com; technicalservices@immarbe.com or