



ASSISTANT ENGINEERS ONBOARD SHORT RANGE AND EXTENDED SHORT RANGE COMMERCIAL YACHTS < 500 GT

Yachting Notice 18

Notice to Yacht Owners, Yacht Operators, Managers, Masters, Owners' Representatives, Appointed Surveyors, Recognised Organisations and Stakeholders

1. Introduction & Purpose

As a leading flag administration in the superyacht sector, the Malta Ship Registry continuously strives to set the global standard by delivering pragmatic, forward-thinking, and commercially responsive regulatory solutions.

Driven by strong engagement from the yachting industry, key stakeholders, and operational representatives, the Malta Ship Registry has re-evaluated the requirement for an Assistant Engineer onboard Short Range and Extended Short Range commercial yachts < 500 GT. This review takes into account:

- Existing Commercial Yacht Code (CYC) provisions allowing dispensations for Assistant Engineers.
- The operational reality that yachts spend a significant portion of their operational lifecycle safely at berth.
- The prevalence of modern unmanned machinery spaces.
- The inherent propulsion redundancy within this segment, where motor yachts generally feature twin main engine installations and sailing yachts combine mechanical and sail propulsion.
- Global industry challenges surrounding the recruitment and retention of qualified Assistant Engineers.
- The advanced technical complexity of modern marine propulsion systems, which routinely require specialised manufacturer-certified technicians rather than routine onboard overhauls.
- The widespread adoption of comprehensive shore-based technical maintenance contracts with engine manufacturers.

As from the **15th September 2026**, this Directorate will be adopting a risk-based approach to the Assistant Engineer requirement for Short Range and Extended Short Range commercial yachts < 500 GT, while maintaining appropriate safeguards for safe operation, machinery maintenance and continued compliance.

Accordingly, this Notice sets out the conditions under which an Assistant Engineer may not be required onboard, and it details the supporting evidence to be maintained onboard and made available for verification.



2. Main Policy Framework

To streamline safe manning requirements for commercial yachts < 500 GT holding Short Range or Extended Short Range navigation notations, an Assistant Engineer will only be required if the yacht operates with continuously manned machinery spaces (24/7) or lacks an active engine shore-based maintenance contract, or both.

3. Definitions and Summary Matrix

Unmanned Machinery Spaces means machinery spaces housing the main propulsion engines that are not continuously manned on a 24/7 basis, regardless of whether the yacht has been formally assigned a Unattended Machinery Space (UMS) class notation by a Classification Society or not.

Active Engine Shore-Based Maintenance Contracts refer to valid maintenance contracts executed between the registered owner and:

1. The engine manufacturer; or
2. A service company duly authorised by the engine manufacturer or an official dealer; or
3. The yacht builder;
4. In cases where the engine manufacturer or yacht builder is no longer active, a recognised marine engineering company or independent specialist possessing demonstrated competence in the maintenance of the specific engine type.

This term also includes active engine warranty contracts under which servicing, technical support, and operational interventions are directly provided by the engine manufacturer, an authorised dealer, the yacht builder, or a qualified service provider as outlined above.

Summary Matrix: Assistant Engineer Manning Requirements

Navigation Scope	Machinery Space Operational Status	Engine Shore-Based Maintenance Contract	Assistant Engineer Required?
Short Range < 500 GT & Extended Short Range < 500 GT Yachts	Unmanned	Active	No
Short Range < 500 GT & Extended Short Range < 500 GT Yachts	Manned (24/7)	Active / None	Yes
Short Range < 500 GT & Extended Short Range < 500 GT Yachts	Unmanned	None	Yes
Unrestricted Navigation & Short Range ≥ 500 GT & Extended Short Range ≥ 500 GT Yachts	Manned (24/7) / Unmanned	Active / None	Yes



Effective **15 September 2026**, all newly issued Minimum Safe Manning (MSM) Certificates will automatically reflect this framework. Interested operators of CYC certified commercial yachts with existing MSM Certificates are invited to submit an application to the Registry Department through their Local Representatives to request a revised MSM Certificate.

4. Application Process for Existing Commercial Yachts

Local Representatives shall submit applications to the Merchant Shipping Directorate (Registry Office) in person or via email at: shipreg.tm@transport.gov.mt

The application must specify full details of the commercial yacht and be accompanied by the following documentation:

1. **Declaration:** A formal declaration signed by the Master, Registered Owner, or Manager confirming that:
 - Machinery spaces are not continuously manned (24/7); and
 - An active Engine Shore-Based Maintenance Contract is maintained on board.
 - Upon receipt of the revised MSM Certificate onboard, the original existing MSM certificate will immediately be surrendered and returned to the Merchant Shipping Directorate.
2. **Engine Maintenance Contract:** A copy of the active Engine Shore-Based Maintenance Contract including any active engine warranty contracts under which servicing, technical support, and operational intervention are directly provided by the engine manufacturer, an authorised dealer, or the yacht builder.

5. Ultimate Responsibility and Oversight

All newly issued or revised MSM Certificates will include the following mandatory condition:

"An Assistant Engineer is required on board Short Range Commercial Yachts < 500 GT and Extended Short Range Commercial Yachts < 500 GT operating with 24/7 manned machinery spaces, or lacking an active Engine Shore-Based Maintenance Contract, or both."

The Master, Registered Owner, and Manager hold ultimate responsibility for upholding this condition at all times. Failure to continuously satisfy this mandatory condition will result in the yacht's detention until full compliance is re-established.

Appointed Government Surveyors (AGSs) and Recognised Organisations (ROs) Surveyors shall verify compliance during every periodical survey and reflect the yacht's unmanned machinery space status on the Survey Guidelines in conformance to the above definition and in conformance to the CYC.

6. Applicability & Scope

This policy applies exclusively to CYC Certified **Short Range Commercial Yachts < 500 GT** and **Extended Short Range Commercial Yachts < 500 GT**. It does not apply to Unrestricted Navigation Yachts, Commercial Yachts ≥ 500 GT, Commercial Yachts < 24m, Passenger Yachts or any other vessel types or tonnage categories.



7. Implementation

Any revision to the onboard crew complement shall only take effect once the revised Minimum Safe Manning (MSM) Certificate is issued and placed onboard the yacht.

All enquiries related to technical and application procedures, should be addressed to this Directorate on yachtsmalta.tm@transport.gov.mt

Merchant Shipping Directorate

10 September 2026

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www.transport.gov.mt/ship-registration



Merchant Shipping Directorate
ISO 9001:2015 certified