

<b>Merchant Marine Notice</b>		<b>QAF-018</b>
MMN-25-002	Issue Date: February, 2025	Page 1 of 7
Approved by: Technical Manager		Approved by: Quality Assurance & Compliance Manager

**Title:** Guidelines for the Implementation of Annual Flag State Inspection

**To:** Ship Owners, ISM Operators, Ship Managers, Deputy Registrars

**MMN Superseded:** N/A **Revision No.:** N/A  
**Issuance Date:** 01 March 2025

### 1. REFERENCE

- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) Article 94.
- Merchant Ships (Registration) Act, Chapter 236, *in its latest revision*.
- Memo No. [TDM002-2024](#): GSI Program Reinstated for Belize Flagged Vessels.
- Memo No. [TDM003-2024](#): Clarification of Memo TDM002-2024 “GSI Program Reinstated for Belize Flagged Vessels”.
- Memo No. [TDM005-2024](#): Requirements for the Proper Reporting of General State Inspections.
- Memo No. [TDM007-2024](#): Enhancement of the General Safety Inspection Program - Paris MoU.

### 2. REVOKED

[MMN-19-006r3](#): Port State Control Analysis and Self-Inspection Program.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

- **Annual Flag State Inspection:** A mandatory inspection/audit of Belize-registered ships. These inspections occur every 12 months following the initial Flag State inspection.
- **Initial Flag State Inspection:** The first flag State Inspection **completed** no later than six (6) months after a ship is registered with IMMARBEL, or for existing ships, (*Section 7.2.1.*) the first annual inspection conducted three (3) months before or three (3) months after the anniversary date.
- **Existing Ship:** Any ship registered with IMMARBEL before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025.
- **New Ship:** Any ship registered with IMMARBEL on or after 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025.
- **Flag State Inspector:** An inspector authorized by the Belize Administration to perform inspections on ships flying the Belize Flag.
- **Flag State Inspections:** Inspections of ships performed by a Flag State Inspector.
- **Inspection companies:** Companies authorized to carry out Flag State Inspections (FSI) on ships registered with IMMARBEL.

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#### 4. INTRODUCTION

- 4.1. **Responsibility of Owners/Operators:** It is the responsibility of the owners/operators to ensure that their ships operate safely, improving maritime safety, security, and marine pollution prevention. The Flag State is responsible for implementing processes ensuring ships flying its flag comply with international maritime regulations, exercising effective Flag State jurisdiction in line with relevant international instruments.
- 4.2. **IMMARBE's Commitment:** The International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE) remains committed to ensuring that all vessels flying its flag comply with international regulations. IMMARBE strives to eliminate substandard ships from its fleet while focusing on improving vessel quality to achieve excellence in shipping.
- 4.3. **Flag State Inspections Program:** To assist owners and operators in meeting regulatory requirements, IMMARBE relaunched its Flag State Inspections Program on 1st March 2024. Under this program, owners must ensure that their vessels undergo annual inspections conducted by a duly appointed Flag State Inspector. These inspections serve to verify that all Belize-flagged ships comply with international regulations concerning safety, pollution prevention, and crew competency.

#### 5. PURPOSE

- 5.1. The purpose of this Merchant Marine Notice is to provide guidance to all owners and operators regarding the mandatory Annual Flag State Inspection and outlines their obligation to make proper and timely arrangements to ensure full compliance with these requirements for all Belize-registered vessels.

#### 6. APPLICATION/EXEMPTIONS

- 6.1. This Merchant Marine Notice applies to:
  - 6.1.1. All Belize-flagged vessels engaged in commercial activities and subjected to Port State Control Inspections (PSCI) as defined in [Resolution A.1185\(33\)](#) Procedures for Port State Control.
  - 6.1.2. Nothing in this Notice shall prejudice any other Notices, Memos, or Advisories issued by this Administration.

#### 6.2. Exemptions:

The following vessels are exempt from the requirements of this notice:

- i. Vessels registered for single delivery voyages.
- ii. Vessels **not** propelled by mechanical means.
- iii. Pleasure yachts **not** engaged in trade.

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- iv. **New Buildings:** Newly built vessels may be exempted from the provisions of this notice for up to five (5) years after entry into service, coinciding with the renewal date of their International Cargo Ship Safety Construction certificate (ICSSC).

## 7. CONTENT

### 7.1. Initial Inspection:

- 7.1.1. Effective 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025, all new registered vessels will have six (6) months after registration to complete their initial Flag State Inspection.
- 7.1.2. These vessels will not receive Permanent Registration until the Flag State Inspection is completed and deficiencies are rectified, unless otherwise determined by the Administration.
- 7.1.3. For existing vessels, the initial Flag State Inspection is due six (6) months after the anniversary date of the vessel's statutory certificate (ICSSC), effective 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

### 7.2. Annual inspection:

- 7.2.1. The *annual inspection* should be conducted three (3) months before or three (3) months after the anniversary date.
- 7.2.2. *Anniversary Date:* The day and month each year that corresponds to the expiration date of the relevant ICSSC certificate. This date is six (6) months after the anniversary date of the vessel's statutory certificates.

### 7.3. Additional Inspections:

- 7.3.1. The Belize Administration may assign additional inspections as necessary.
- 7.3.2. An additional inspection, according to the circumstances, may be requested by the Administration to ensure the vessel remains in satisfactory condition and that the ship complies with relevant regulations.

## 8. REQUIREMENTS

- 8.1. Each vessel subject to this notice must undergo an inspection and be issued a *Statement of Compliance for Annual Flag State Inspection (Form TDF-037, Annex 2)* valid for twelve (12) months from the anniversary date, subject to rectification of deficiencies identified by the Flag State Inspector.
- 8.2. Inspections must be requested by the owners/operators or their duly authorized agent using the application form TDF-036 (*Annex 1*) Request for Flag State Inspections.
- 8.3. The application must be submitted to [inspections@immarbe.com](mailto:inspections@immarbe.com).

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- 8.4. An inspector may inquire with the Administration to determine if a vessel is due for an annual Flag State inspection.
- 8.5. Prior to boarding any Belize flagged vessel, the inspector must receive approval from the List of companies authorized to conduct flag state inspection on behalf of Belize (Refer to Form TDL-023 (*Annex 6*)). Unauthorized boarding is prohibited (Refer to Form TDF-007 (*Annex 3*) Authorization to carry out FSI).

## 9. RESPONSIBILITY

### 9.1. Owners/operators:

Owners/operators or their agents must:

1. Apply for and make arrangements for their vessel's annual Flag State inspection three (3) months before or three (3) months after the anniversary date. For newly registered vessel, the owners/operators must arrange the Flag State Inspection within the provisional period before obtaining permanent registration.
2. Ensure agreed charges for transportation expenses are paid directly to the inspector.
3. Inform relevant authorities of the expected arrival date and time of the Flag State inspector and arrange boarding.
4. Notify the inspector of any issues or concerns regarding the vessel prior to the inspection.
5. Ensure the ship's master cooperates with the inspector and signs (*in duplicate*) the Form TDF-003a (*Annex 4*) List of Findings.
6. Take appropriate actions to rectify deficiencies identified by the Flag State Inspector immediately.
7. Owners must immediately notify IMMARBE of corrective actions for detainable deficiencies.
8. A *Statement of Compliance for Annual Flag State Inspections* will be issued by the Administration after confirmation of rectification of each deficiency.
9. Submit rectification of deficiencies within 14 days of Flag State Inspection, using Form TDF-020 (*Annex 7*), concerning monitoring and correction of deficiencies.

### 9.2. Flag State Inspectors:

Inspectors must:

1. Communicate with the owners/operators or their agents before scheduling/boarding a vessel.
2. Confirm and agree that the owners/operators or their agents will cover transportation expenses, subject to approval from the Flag State.
3. Seek approval from the authorized List of Companies (Form TDL-023 (*Annex 6*)) before boarding of the vessel.
4. Present their valid ID card, issued by the Administration, upon boarding any vessel.

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5. Complete the inspection using the Form TDF-003 (*Annex 4*) Flag State Inspection Report.
6. Upon completion of the inspection, the inspector shall provide a copy of Form TDF-003a (*Annex 5*) List of Findings to the master, who will sign it in duplicate. One copy shall remain with the master of the ship.
7. Flag State Inspectors shall immediately notify the Administration of any detainable deficiencies along with the operator/master's proposed corrective actions.
8. Notify the Administration immediately of any detainable deficiencies and the corrective actions proposed by the operator/master. A copy of the report and the List of Findings (Form TDF-003a (*Annex 5*)) shall be provided to the flag Administration upon completion.

#### **10. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

- 10.1. Under no circumstances should the same person who surveyed a vessel for statutory certificates conduct its Annual Flag State Inspection while those certificates are valid. Similarly, the inspector for the annual safety inspection cannot carry out statutory surveys during the yearly validity of the inspection.
- 10.2. Inspectors must complete their inspection using Form TDF-003 (*Annex 4*) Flag State Inspection Report and apply professional judgment for special attention items.

#### **11. Extensions:**

- 11.1. In exceptional circumstances, (e.g., force majeure), the Administration may permit the extension of the annual Flag State inspection. Examples of force majeure include:
  - The vessel is at sea.
  - The vessel is at a port where inspectors are unavailable.
  - The vessel is at a port where inspectors cannot be deployed (e.g., war).
- 11.2. In such case, operators must apply for a *Statement of Extension* via their designated office. Extensions are granted for up to three (3) months and are subject to a service charge in accordance with [MMN-19-003](#).

#### **12. ACTIONS REQUESTED**

- 12.1. Shipowners, ISM Operators, and Deputy Registrars are advised to ensure all Belize-flagged ships comply with this notice. Operators may contact any inspection companies approved by IMMARBE to arrange inspections. Details of approved inspection companies can be found in TDL-023 (*Annex 6*) List of Companies Authorized to Conduct Flag State Inspections.

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### 13. DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

- 13.1. \$10,000: Failure to apply for and make proper arrangements for the attendance of their vessel for the Annual Flag State inspection.
- 13.2. \$10,000: Failure to submit to the Administration a rectification report within 14 days of the Flag State Inspection.
- 13.3. \$15,000: Repeat offenders under conditions outlined in 13.1 and 13.2.
- 13.4. \$15,000 and cancellation from the registry: Vessels that fail to comply with this notice and are subsequently detained.
- 13.5. Other legal actions as specified under the Belize Merchant Ships (Registration) Act and Statutory Instrument 56 of 1999.

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 1 March 2025.




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Eng. Eduardo Simon  
Technical Manager  
IMMARBE

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Mr. Paul Gersok  
Managing Director  
IMMARBE

Any queries related to this Notice shall be directed to [technicalservices@immarbe.com](mailto:technicalservices@immarbe.com)



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**Annexes:**

- Annex 1: Request for Flag State Inspections (Form TDF-036)
- Annex 2: Statement of Compliance for Annual Flag State Inspection (Form TDF-037)
- Annex 3: Authorization to Carry Out Flag State Inspection (Form TDF-007)
- Annex 4: Flag State Inspection Report (Form TDF-003)
- Annex 5: List of Findings (Form TDF-003a)
- Annex 6: List of Companies Authorized to Conduct Flag State Inspections (TDL-023)
- Annex 7: Monitoring and Correction of Deficiencies for Flag State Inspection (FSI) or Port State Control Inspection (PSC) (Form TDF-020)