

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"

M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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NMC ISSUES NEW EXTENSIONS AS SHUTDOWN CONTINUES

The National Maritime Center/U.S. Coast Guard has issued "Update #3" to its shutdown guidance, extending the validity of key mariner documents. Merchant Mariner Credentials (*National Endorsements only*) and Medical Certificates (*National and Pilot expiration dates only*) that expire in October and November 2025 will now remain valid until January 31, 2026. Mariners who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential AND a copy of the attached letter while sailing under the authority of those credentials. The NMC will not issue separate or replacement MMCs or Medical Certificates reflecting the extension. The policy also extends the validity of training course completion certificates, approval-to-test letters, and additional information letters through the same date.

While the extensions provide short-term relief, the shutdown continues to create a significant backlog. If operations resumed immediately, the NMC would face nearly 9,700 pending applications, including about 7,500 new submissions received during the 37-day shutdown. Based on NMC performance data, it could take 12 to 13 months to process the accumulated applications, with average wait times expected to rise to 40–55 days.

The Coast Guard is urging mariners to submit applications as soon as possible to secure their place in the processing queue. Update #3 is available from the NMC and has been posted on the M.E.B.A. homepage at www.mebaunion.org

WWII MARINERS WILL BE HONORED IN DC ON VETERANS DAY

For the third year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has invited members of the American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV) to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on National Veterans Day, November 11, 2025, to honor U.S. Merchant Marine veterans of World War II. The ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery provide one of our Nation's most enduring displays of respect for all U.S. veterans.

At the wreath-laying ceremony — traditionally held at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month — the U.S. Merchant Marine will be represented by World War II veterans William Balabanow, radio officer aboard the SS SHICKSHINNY, James Quinn, veteran of the North Africa campaign and the D-Day invasion at Normandy and Dave Yoho, engine room crew member aboard

the SS GREAT MEADOW. During WWII, merchant mariners suffered more than 9,500 casualties, yet they kept going to sea, delivering the goods wherever and whenever needed, often without any escort. These brave merchant mariners definitely earned their status as United States veterans.

Capt. Darin Huggins, an M.E.B.A. member who is AMMV's recently elected national president, and Dennis Ng, AMMV's vice president for our New Jersey/Pennsylvania region and son of a late USMM WWII veteran, will represent AMMV at the National Veterans Day ceremonies. They will be seated in the audience when remarks from President Donald Trump and senior members of his cabinet are given at the Arlington National Cemetery's Memorial Amphitheater.

Capt. Huggins said, "Please know that the American Merchant Marine Veterans, founded by our World War II Merchant Mariners in 1984, still tolls the bell of legacy and educates the people of our nation about the vital supply chain operations of the maritime industry that are maintained by dedicated and courageous men and women of the United States Merchant Marine."

ITF: SEAFARER SHORE LEAVE PLUMMETS SINCE PANDEMIC

A new study by the ITF Seafarers' Trust has confirmed concerns that access to shore leave for seafarers has continued to decline since the pandemic. Even when seafarers visit welfare centers, their stays are typically brief — often lasting less than two hours. Welfare providers echo the findings of a report released earlier this year with the World Maritime University, which identified heavy workloads onboard and limited port time as the primary barriers preventing many seafarers from taking shore leave.

The new report, *Shore Leave and the Future of Port-Based Welfare*, presents insights from a global survey of port-based welfare workers, offering an important complement to the earlier study *Shore Leave: Rare, Brief and in Danger of Extinction*. The survey gathered 96 responses from 83 organizations serving seafarers in 25 countries. It found a 61% drop in seafarers spending time ashore in welfare centers since the start of the pandemic, with 68% of respondents reporting that most visits now last under two hours. In addition to time constraints and onboard workload, port state and company restrictions were also cited as major contributing factors.

The port welfare community shares the frustrations of seafarers. Seafarers' centers and related services are vital to the maritime welfare network, providing access to facilities, opportunities for rest, and meaningful connection with life ashore. The report underscores that barriers to shore leave are complex and systemic, with multiple interlinked causes. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of seafarer welfare and wellbeing since the pandemic, this awareness has not yet translated into policies or practices that enable shore leave. Without intervention, there is a growing risk of a downward spiral: fewer seafarers taking shore leave will lead to the decline of port-based welfare services, which in turn will further reduce opportunities for seafarers to go ashore — deepening the very problem the industry seeks to solve. You can view the report [here](#).

APPLICANTS SEEKING MEMBERSHIP SHOULD FORWARD DOCS TO HQ

Qualified applicants trying to make membership in December must make sure they provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next District Investigating Committee (DIC) report. The DIC meets twice a year to review applicants for membership and will issue a report in late November to be voted upon by members during the regular December membership meetings (December 8-12).

To make membership, an applicant needs the required sailing days or specified years of employment with a particular bargaining unit, must be current with service charges and must complete other necessary requirements which may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation.

Applicants should know that they are responsible for providing their local Union hall/Headquarters with the documentation demonstrating their fulfillment of the application requirements. Once they submit the requisite amount of sea time (or documented years of service) to Headquarters and have otherwise fulfilled the needed requirements as stated in the application packet they signed, they may be eligible for membership. Applicants who have fulfilled the necessary requirements should forward their information to Headquarters. Applicants have been mailed letters from HQ referencing the missing requirements needed for that applicant to make membership. Referenced documents must be submitted to HQ before the DIC finalizes their report at the end of November if the applicant wishes to be considered for membership during this review period.

If you have questions about your status, you can contact the Membership Department at membership@mebaunion.org. All questions about service charge payments should be directed to the M.E.B.A. Accounting Department at accounting@mebaunion.org. Qualified applicants who fail to make the deadline will have to wait another six months – until the June 2025 report – to make membership.

CMES SEEKING ACADEMIC DEAN

The Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School is looking for a seasoned and dynamic leader to serve as its Academic Dean. This role offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of mariner education and enhance the student learning experience. The Academic Dean will oversee the development and delivery of the School's academic programs, ensuring that students receive the highest quality education. The position involves collaborating closely with faculty and staff, fostering a culture of academic excellence, and leading strategic planning efforts. The Dean will also manage budgets for academic programs and represent the School at professional and educational events.

Ideal candidates will hold a degree in Marine Engineering, Marine Transportation, Education, or a related field, along with the highest-level U.S. Coast Guard license (Engine or Deck). Proven leadership experience in higher education, a strong grasp of curriculum development, and knowledge of accreditation processes are essential. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills are also required to thrive in this role. Salary and employment terms are flexible and will reflect the experience and qualifications of the successful candidate. Interested individuals are invited to submit their resumes to CMES Director Bryan Jennings at bjennings@mebaschool.org. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled.

VACATION BENEFITS – 2025 YEAR-END CLOSING

Apply for Vacation and Port Relief Benefits early to avoid the year-end rush.

- **FILING DEADLINE:** The deadline for issuing checks dated in 2025 in the Plan Office is Wednesday, December 17, 2025.
- **DIRECT DEPOSIT:** The final Direct Deposit Transfer for 2025 will be made on 12/18/2025 and the funds will be deposited into bank accounts on 12/22/2025.

- Any requests for Port Relief and Vacation checks received after 12/17/25 at 12:00 PM EST will be paid in the order received beginning 1/2/2026.

Any member who requires that his/her check be dated in 2025 must file before this deadline. Remember, Thursday, December 25, 2024 and Thursday, January 1, 2026 are holidays and the Plan Office will be closed. It is always wise to plan ahead, so you should verify the specific holiday schedule with the Plan Office Representative.

Split Your Vacation Payments between 2025 and 2026

You can submit an Application for Vacation Pay prior to the end of the year and request that the payment of your vacation benefits be split. Two checks will be issued to you, one in 2025 and a second in 2026. The 12/17/2025 deadline applies to split claims also. The vacation benefits paid in this manner MUST be a continuous vacation period.

Please contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore at Vacation@mebaplans.org or by phone at 800-811-6322 if you have any questions.

50 YEARS LATER: THE LOSS OF THE EDMUND FITZGERALD

Fifty years ago on Monday, the Great Lakes bore witness to one of the most haunting maritime tragedies in American history. On the night of November 10, 1975, the SS EDMUND FITZGERALD, a massive ore carrier nearly 730 feet long, vanished beneath the storm-tossed waters of Lake Superior — taking all 29 men aboard with her. Built by Great Lakes Engineering Works in 1958 at River Rouge, Michigan, and operated by the Oglebay Norton Company for Northwestern Mutual Life, the FITZGERALD was the pride of the Great Lakes fleet. Known affectionately as “The Big Fitz,” she was the largest ship sailing the lakes at the time, carrying taconite iron ore from the mines near Duluth, Minnesota, to steel mills in Detroit and Toledo. She broke cargo records year after year and was renowned for her sleek lines, speed, and capable crew.

But on that fateful November voyage, she encountered the full fury of a Great Lakes gale — sustained winds over 50 knots, waves towering more than 25 feet, and snow squalls that turned night into blindness. Her last known communication came at 7:10 p.m., when Captain Ernest M. McSorley radioed the nearby ARTHUR M. ANDERSON, “We are holding our own.” Minutes later, the FITZGERALD disappeared from radar. No distress call was ever received.

For days, Coast Guard cutters and aircraft searched the storm-lashed lake, but only twisted debris, empty lifeboats, and the memory of 29 souls remained. The wreck was discovered weeks later in 530 feet of water, her hull broken in two. To this day, the exact cause of her sinking remains debated — structural failure, flooding, or a rogue wave — but the enduring mystery has only deepened the ship’s legend.

In the decades since, the EDMUND FITZGERALD has transcended tragedy to become an emblem of the Great Lakes’ might and the endurance of those who sail them. Gordon Lightfoot’s 1976 ballad, “*The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*,” brought the story to the world, ensuring that each November 10th, bells are tolled and names are read across the lakeshore communities of Duluth, Whitefish Bay, and Sault Ste. Marie.

This year's 50th anniversary commemorations stretch from Michigan to Minnesota. At the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point in Michigan — just 17 miles from where the FITZGERALD went down — the ship's bell, recovered in 1995, will ring 29 times, once for each crewman, and a thirtieth time for all who have lost their lives on the Great Lakes. Surviving family members of the crew are expected to attend a private ceremony following the public observance.

M.E.B.A. HALLS AND OFFICES CLOSED FOR VETERANS DAY

Veterans Day will be observed on Tuesday, November 11 and all M.E.B.A. halls and offices will be closed. Veterans Day marks the anniversary of the agreement that ended World War I in 1918. Originally known as Armistice Day, it is now celebrated as a day to commemorate all veterans in the U.S. including Merchant Marine veterans.

It is observed as Remembrance Day in the Commonwealth nations, and as Armistice Day in France and Belgium. Birmingham, AL hosted the very first Veterans Day parade in 1947 and it continues today as an annual tradition. Each year on November 11th, right at 11 a.m. (11/11 at 11), a wreath-laying ceremony is held in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This will be the 72nd annual National Veterans Day Observance.

NEXT MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS *(All times are local)*

Friday, November 7 – Honolulu@1100

Monday, December 8 – Boston@1200. Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Tuesday, December 9 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

Wednesday, December 10 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org

Thursday, December 11 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, December 12 – Honolulu@1100

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*M.E.B.A. does not tolerate assault, or harassment of any kind.
If you see something, say something – The M.E.B.A. Emergency Hotline
can be reached at 1-888-519-0018.*

The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and demonstrated track record of readiness, safety, and loyalty in answering America's call to action in times of both peace and war is unrivaled in the world. M.E.B.A. HQ – Phone: (202) 638-5355; mebahq@mebaunion.org. Website: www.mebaunion.org For publication and related inquiries (and to send photos & hot news tips) contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org. Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram. The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or www.mebaschool.org. M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or www.mebaplans.org