BERMUDA MERCHANT SHIPPING NOTICE

Death on Board 2026-022

Application

Ship Owners, Managers, Masters and Officers of Bermuda Registered ships

References

Merchant Shipping Act 2002 as amended, Sections 121, 232 & 233
Merchant Shipping (Return of Births and Deaths) Regulations 1980
Merchant Shipping (Seafarer's Employment) Regulations 2013 as amended
Merchant Shipping (Official Log Books) Regulations 1991

Summary

This notice provides guidance on the documentation required by the Bermuda Shipping and Maritime Authority (BSMA) following a death of a person on board a Bermuda registered ship, otherwise known as a "British Ship". This Notice also contains guidance on what is required by the BSMA when a person is lost overboard, when a passenger dies in the ship, or when a seafarer dies in the ship or ashore following an accident in the ship, and when an inquiry is required.

In all cases a Return of Death by the Master using the approved RBD 1 form will be required.

This Notice was issued on 24th November 2026 and supersedes Bermuda Merchant Shipping Notice 2019-022 issued on 30th April 2019.

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1 Definitions

(1) For the purposes of this notice the following definitions apply.

a. Doctor - A Medical Practitioner registered to practice medicine.

b. In the ship - Includes in a ship's lifeboat or liferaft and being lost from a ship, a ship's lifeboat or a ship's liferaft

c. Master - Every person (except a pilot) having command or charge of a ship or offshore installation, as applicable.

d. Proper Officer - (a)in relation to a port in the United Kingdom or a relevant British possession, means any officer exercising in that port functions similar to those of a superintendent; (b) in relation to any other port, means an officer exercising in that port functions similar to those of a superintendent, or a consular officer appointed by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom; E.g BSMA Surveyor, or Superintendent/consular officer (UK Ports only).

e. Ship – Every description of vessel used in navigation.

f. Company - As defined in the ISM Code.

2 General Requirements for reporting Deaths in all cases.

(1) It is the duty of the Master under the above regulations to report any person that dies in a ship, registered in Bermuda.

(2) Original copies of the below documents are to be made.

(3) For the purposes of (2.1) above, form RBD 1 is to be completed, signed and dated by the Master of the ship. The lower left side box on page 2, titled "Certificate to be signed by the proper officer to whom this return is delivered" is to be left blank. See Appendix 1.

(4) The Master should also fill in the relevant sections for recording a death in the Official Log Book (OLB), Section 6. See Appendix 2.

(5) The Official Log Book, Section 7 may be used to record any further narrative, such as details of known circumstances leading up to the death and how/where the body was found.

(6) Complete the form using the link provided below. Once submitted, an email containing a secure document upload link will be sent to the email address entered on the form. This upload link should be used to submit all documentation related to the death. Form Link: Home | Bermuda Shipping and Maritime Authority

(7) Scanned copies of the following completed documents are to be submitted to the Registry Department via the link sent to you via email.

a. RBD 1

b. OLB, Section 6

c. OLB, Section 7

d. Statement from the ship's Doctor[1] detailing their account of the death and stating cause of death, if known. Must be signed and dated with their name printed in full.

1 Only applies to ships requiring a Doctor as part of the Minimum Safe Manning Document

(8) Upon receipt of these documents the BSMA Registry Department will review them and revert with either confirmation of receipt, or if required, further actions dependant upon the circumstances of the death.

(9) The above email correspondence is to be appended to the two (2) original copies of the documentation.

(10) At their next attendance on board, the Bermuda Surveyor will, once satisfied with the correspondence from the Registrar, complete, sign and stamp both original copies of the RBD1 and Section 6 of the OLB. Alternatively, if the ship is calling into a British Port the Proper Officer in that port may complete the RBD1.

(11) One of the completed sets of paperwork will be retained by the surveyor, with the other set being left on board.

(12) Guidance on how the RBD1 and OLB Section 6 are to be completed is included in Appendices 1 and 2.

Note: The RBD 1 should be filled in as clearly as possible. Ambiguity or omission of detail will only delay the process i.e. stating the cause of death as "missing". However, it is understood that in the case of a man overboard such a description, for example "missing – lost overboard and presumed dead" may be warranted.

3 Deaths due to Natural Causes, or a known condition of the deceased

(1) When a Ship's Doctor determines the death to be of natural causes, or a known condition of the deceased, the Registrar will respond to the electronic submission of documents with confirmation of receipt. With this, the attending Bermuda surveyor will endorse the RBD 1 (the lower left side box on page 2) and endorse the entry in the front of the OLB.

4 Where the attending Doctor is unable to state that the cause of death is due to Natural Causes, or due to a known condition of the deceased, or when the matter concerns an accident or a Man Overboard incident, or if the ship does not carry a Doctor.

(1) The Master should immediately advise the BSMA and the authorities at the next or current port.

(2) When the cause of death cannot be determined for any of the reason above, a Post Mortem will be required. This will be indicated by the Registry Department as part of their confirmation of receipt of the electronic submission.

(3) A copy of the death certificate or results of the post mortem should be scanned and sent to the BSMA.

(4) The local authorities and the BSMA will independently determine how the matter is to be investigated. The BSMA will also advise who will endorse the RBD 1 form and OLB.

Note: A Post Mortem is invariably required when there has been an accident resulting in death.

5 Obligations under MLC

(1) Whenever a seafarer dies in the course of their employment on board a ship, or if they leave a ship due to injury or illness the Master shall arrange for the property belonging to that seafarer to be collected and for a full list of the property to be prepared.

(2) The list of property shall be signed as a correct and true list by the Master and countersigned by another seafarer. The master shall retain one copy of the list.

(3) With the exception of any property that is perishable or which cannot be transmitted as a consequence of it being prohibited or illegal, the shipowner shall ensure that all the property belonging to a deceased seafarer as well as a copy of the signed list of property is returned to the seafarer's next of kin.

(4) The shipowner shall ensure that property left on board a ship and belonging to a seafarer who leaves a ship due to illness or injury shall be collected and listed in accordance with paragraph (2) and depending on the circumstances either–

a. retained on board until the seafarer's return;

b. delivered to the seafarer at his accommodation ashore; or

c. returned to the seafarer's place of domicile.

6 Shipowner's liability

(1) The shipowner shall be liable in the case of every seafarer to provide financial security sufficient to ensure compensation to any seafarer in the event of the death or long term disability of the seafarer as a result of an occupational illness, injury or hazard. The extent of compensation shall be set out in either an applicable collective bargaining agreement or in the seafarer's employment agreement and shall be not less than the current terms agreed by the International Bargaining Forum. The costs of burial in the case of a seafarer who dies either aboard the ship or ashore during the period of his employment on board shall be met by the shipowner

Appendix 1

Bermuda Government
Department of Maritime Administration

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING (RETURNS OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS) REGULATIONS 1980

RETURN OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS

FOR THE PURPOSES OF REGULATIONS 5 AND 6 OF THE MERCHANT SHIPPING (RETURNS OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS) REGULATIONS 1980

IMPORTANT: The Consul or other Officer abroad or the Superintendent in the United Kingdom to whom this Return is rendered should forward it without delay, BY AIR, wherever possible, direct to: The Registrar of Shipping, P.O. Box HM1628, Hamilton HMGX, Bermuda.

Name of Ship and Port of Registry	Official Number	Name and address of owners
Ship Name	123456	Business Name, Street, Town/City Country

A Return of Birth or Death is to be delivered to a Superintendent, Consul, or Shipping Master at the earliest opportunity. The Master should produce the Return together with his Official Log Book recording the occurrence.

INSTRUCTIONS TO MASTERS*

BERMUDA REGISTERED SHIPS

The Master is required to make a Return of any birth of a child and of any death in the ship, **and of the death, WHEREVER OCCURING OUTSIDE OF Bermuda, of any person **employed** in the ship.

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE TO CONSULS, SHIPPING MASTERS, AND SUPERINTENDENTS

It is important that the Officer receiving a Return from a Master be satisfied that it is correctly completed in all particulars. Any omission or ambiguity – such as stating the cause of death simply as "missing" – will only lead to delay in registration. The Officer should also satisfy himself that the person making the Return is the Master of the ship and that the vessel is a sea-going ship. He should confirm that the entry in this Return and in the Official Log Book (where carried) are consistent with one another.

If a death occurred ashore or the body was brought ashore it would be helpful if a copy of the Post Mortem findings or other medical or police reports with a translation into English if in a foreign language is attached to this Return. The Officer should also refer to Chapter VIII of his United Kingdom Instructions or Notes for Guidance in order to find out whether he is to hold an inquiry into the cause of death.

*Master includes every person (except a pilot) having command or charge of any ship.

** "In the ship" includes in a ship's boat or a ship's life raft and being lost from a ship, a ship's boat, or ship's life raft.

EXAMPLE

Appendix 1

BIRTHS

Date of Birth	Place of Birth (Port or Latitude and Longitude if at sea)	Forenames (if any) and Surname of Child	Sex	Father		Mother			Signature of Father * and/or Mother of the child
				Name, Surname, and Occupation	Usual Residence and Nationality	Name and Surname	Maiden surname and Surname at marriage if different	Usual Residence and Nationality	
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*NOTE: If child is illegitimate the particulars relating to the father must not be given unless it is at the joint request of the mother and the person acknowledging himself to the father, in which case such person shall, as well as the mother, sign the Return.

DEATHS

Date of Death	Place of Death (by Latitude and Longitude if at sea)	Name and Surname of Deceased (also maiden surname of woman who has married, if known)	Sex	Date of Birth (if known) or Age	Occupation, rank, or profession	Usual Residence at time of Death	Nationality	Cause of Death
10/04/2019	At Sea 27'09.9'N 78'13.0W	Jane Doe	F	01/01/1935	Retired	Street, Town, Country	British	Cardiac Arrest, secondary to Cardiac Disease

CERTIFICATE TO BE SIGNED BY THE PROPER OFFICER TO WHOM THIS RETURN IS DELIVERED

TO BE COMPLETED BY ATTENDING BERMUDA SURVEYOR

This report was made to me at the date and place shown hereunder. I have examined the Official Log Book containing the relevant entries. The wages and effects of the deceased have been received by me _____ left in charge of the Master _____. I have / have not held an inquiry under Section 232 of the Merchant Shipping Act 2002 (Delete as necessary)

Signature of Officer _____

Title of Officer and Port _____

Date _____

CERTIFICATE TO BE SIGNED BY MASTER

I hereby certify that this Return is correct and true and that I have recorded the death in the Official Log Book or other record of the ship and that the extract from the Official Log Book at page 4 of this Return is a true extract.

Signature of Master _____

Full Name of Master _____

Date _____

EXAMPLE

Appendix 1

Additional particulars in respect of deceased members of the crew, if known.

Name Relationship & Address of Next of Kin _____

_____

_____

Discharge Book No. _____

Bermuda ships only. If the deceased was engaged on a "supplementary" agreement state date and place such agreement was opened.	Date:
	Place:

Copy of entry or entries relating to the death appearing in the narrative section of the Official Log Book or other official record.

Date & hour of the occurrence	Place of occurrence or situation by latitude and longitude at sea	Date of entry	Entries required by Regulations made under Section 64, Merchant Shipping Act, 1979

EXAMPLE

GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Transport
Department of Maritime Administration

Appendix 2

SECTION 6

Births and Deaths

BERMUDA SHIP REGISTRY
Since 1789

EXAMPLE

BIRTHS											
				Father		Mother					
Date of Birth	Place of Birth Port or lat/Long if at sea	Names (if any) and surname of the child	Sex	Name, surname and nationality	Occupation, profession and usual residence	Name, surname and nationality	Maiden surname or surname at marriage if different	Usual residence	Mother's signature	Port at which return is made	Title of officer to whom return is made.

DEATHS											
Date of Death or Loss	Place of Death or loss Port or lat/Long if at sea	Name and surname of the deceased (and if a married woman her maiden surname if known)	Sex	Date of Birth (if known) or age	Occupation, profession and usual residence	Usual residence at the time of death or loss	Nationality	Cause of death (certified by ship's doctor or other medical practitioner if	Signatures Master and a crew member	Port at which return is made **TO BE LEFT BLANK** **BSMA Surveyor to Complete**	Title of officer to whom return is made.
10/04/2019	27'09.9'N 78'13.0W	Jane Doe	F	01/01/1935	Retired	Street, Town, Country	British	Cardiac Arrest	Master and Crew Signatures		