



**TECHNICAL CIRCULAR No. 726 of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

To	All Surveyors/Auditors. All flags
Title	<b>Electronic Statutory &amp; Class Certificates</b>
Reference	CONARINA Instructions

**Verification of Electronic Statutory & Class Certificates**

Ships continue to experience instances of port state control interventions, and sometimes hefty fines, allegedly because the validity of other electronic statutory and class certificates cannot be verified during onboard inspections.

The practice of issuing signed paper certificates to document compliance with maritime rules and regulations may be nearing its end. Recognising that paper certificates are subject to loss or damage and can be impractical to send to globally-trading ships, most major flag administrations, and classification societies, now facilitate the use of electronic certificates.

The process has also been formalized through IMO documents, such as the “Guidelines for the use of electronic certificates” (FAL.5/Circ. 39) and the harmonised “Procedures for port state control”, and in accordance with the latter, port state control officers (PSCOs) are requested to note that.

However, from time to time ships experience instances of port state control (PSC) interventions where the validity of electronic certificates, as well as other official documents, are questioned by the attending PSCO.

The PSC inspection reports stated that some of the certificates requested did not contain a Quick Response (QR) code, nor a Unique Tracking Number (UTN), to facilitate the onboard verification process.

Ship certificates can be in hard copy or electronic version, however, when relying on electronic certificates and documents, it is also important to ensure that the crew is familiar with a reliable method to verify their validity and authenticity.

Despite efforts by IMO, flag states, classification societies, and other official entities, to facilitate the use of electronic certificates and documents, theory and practice are not always the same.

**CONARINA Head Office**

6505 Blue Lagoon Dr. Suite 455  
Miami, FL., 33126  
Tel: 1 (786) 558 5288,  
Fax: 1 (786) 325 0200,  
[joel@conarinagroup.com](mailto:joel@conarinagroup.com)



In some cases, a paper copy printed out from an email sent by a local agent was all that existed onboard, and even if the crew did everything in their power to prove the document's legitimacy, it was still not accepted by the attending inspector.

Ship operators and masters must do their best to prepare for each port of call. Well in advance of arriving at a port, contact the ship's local agent, to ascertain the local authorities' practices and requirements in force at that given time.

Prepare all the required documentation in advance, before arriving in port, and double-check with the ship's local agent to ensure that all is in order. The crew being able to present valid certificates and official documents during the initial PSC inspection is important to give a good first impression. Most flag administrations and classification societies provide the following two way of verifying electronic documents and certificates:

Website verification: Commonly a verification portal URL is provided, and the certificate can be verified by entering the certificate's UTN, normally in combination with the ship's IMO number or document issued date.

QR Code: A QR code on each certificate will have a URL unique to the certificate comprising the parameters required for the verification portal to return the search result. This also eliminates the potential for any typing errors in entering data manually on the verification portal webpage.

The use of electronic certificates and documents must also be controlled through the ship's safety management system, as described in Section 11 of the ISM Code. The onboard procedures for verifying electronic certificates should be always kept up to date and be aligned with the latest instructions and user manuals published by the ship's flag administration and classification society. Consideration should be given to the need for separate instructions addressing how offline verification can be done in case of loss of connectivity, e.g., providing contact details for the respective flag administration and classification society.

REFERENCES:

- CONARINA Instructions

ATTACHMENTS: No.

Kindest Regards,  
CONARINA Technical Office

**CONARINA Head Office**

6505 Blue Lagoon Dr. Suite 455  
Miami, Fl., 33126  
Tel: 1 (786) 558 5288,  
Fax: 1 (786) 325 0200,  
[joel@conarinagroup.com](mailto:joel@conarinagroup.com)