

Seafarers CIVMAR-Gram



Union Continues EBIS Negotiations

CIVMAR Feedback is Vital as New System 'Goes Live'

On July 22, 2008, MSC sent a notice to CIVMARS about a new benefit program called EBIS. This program will allow CIVMARS to make benefit elections and TSP changes electronically. Retirement counseling is also available. After September 30, CIVMARS will no longer be able to file benefit elections by submitting paper forms. All changes will have to be made electronically.

Prior to sending an introductory notice, MSC and the Union conducted discussions and negotiations about the impact of the program upon CIVMARS, about the CIVMAR notice and about other information which would be sent to CIVMARS. These negotiations are continuing.

The Union expressed a great number of concerns about this program. A few of those were 1) whether CIVMARS would have access to the shipboard computers to do the necessary registration and changes during work hours; 2) would there be enough computers on the vessels to accommodate CIVMARS needing to access EBIS; 3) how long it would take to accomplish benefit changes and other transactions as a result of the slow speeds of the computers; 4) how would CIVMARS confirm that important transactions were received and implemented and 5) whether CIVMARS will be able to reach EBIS representatives by telephone from forward deployed areas around the world.

During the negotiations the Union proposed, and MSC agreed, that the timeframe for final implementation of the program would be 60 days and that if necessary, the EBIS phone line representatives would be available to CIVMARS at mutually arranged times after or before the regular phone line hours. The Union hopes this will assist CIVMARS sailing in faraway time zones.

While the Union is hopeful EBIS will be as beneficial as MSC believes it will be, the Union still has many reservations about its use, especially for CIVMARS forward deployed.

It is very important that the Union hears from you regarding your experience with the implementation of EBIS. A timely response from CIVMARS is very important. As noted above, the Union has submitted and will submit proposals to MSC that we believe will help lessen the difficulties of using this new system, and negotiations will continue.

If you have e-mail access, please send e-mail comments regarding your concerns and experiences with the EBIS program to: civmarsupport@seafarers.org or send your comments using the methods noted below. You can also call your government services representatives.

The Union will also be distributing a survey to CIVMARS to get a comprehensive picture of how the program is operating. You may return your survey to your Union representative; you can fax your comments to 301-702-4411 or mail the survey to: CIVMAR EBIS Survey Response; Seafarers International Union, 5201 Auth Way, Camp Springs, Maryland 20746.

The survey will also be available for download at www.seafarers.org by mid-August.

In Solidarity,
SIU/NMU Government Services Representatives (7/25/08)