

# INFORMATION SHEET

## Health Assessment Standard for Marine Pilots



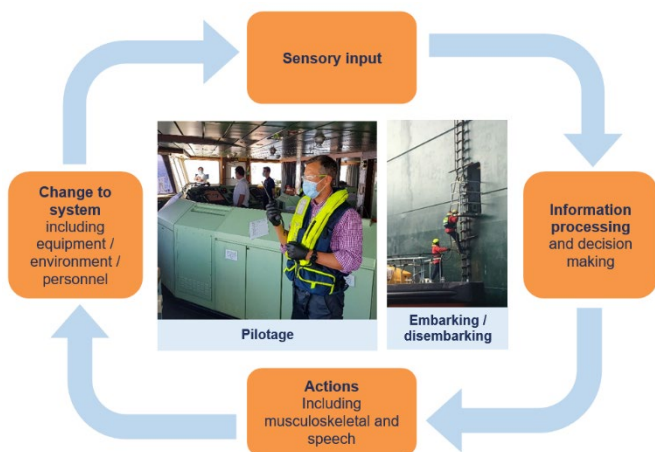
### Revised Standard effective from 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**A marine pilot's role is highly demanding, both physically and psychologically, thus their health is critical for the safe conduct of their work and the safety of our ports.**

Since 2009, a Standard for the health requirements for pilots in New South Wales has supported pilots' fitness for duty through a system of health assessments undertaken at pre-employment, pre-licensing, periodically throughout a pilot's career and as required in response to health concerns.

The Standard undergoes regular review to ensure it keeps pace with medical developments and changes in the demands of the pilotage task. Most recently, a review undertaken in 2021/22 has resulted in the release of a revised Standard, which is published as part of the [NSW Marine Pilotage Code](#).

The revised Standard came into effect on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Since that date, all health assessments conducted for marine pilots must be conducted according to that Standard.



The highly demanding and safety critical nature of pilotage work means that marine pilots need to maintain appropriate levels of fitness and general health.

### New Physical Assessment

The most significant change is the establishment of a separate and more frequent Physical Assessment to support pilots to maintain their capacity to undertake the physically demanding task of pilot ladder transfers. This new assessment has been developed by physiotherapists experienced with the pilotage role and has been tested with pilots from various NSW ports.

Conducted by authorised and trained physiotherapists (AHP-Physiotherapist) the new Physical Assessment aims to assess all physical attributes required for ladder transfer in a consistent and reproducible manner. It includes all the functional tests from the previous Standard, plus two new tests – the Step Up/Jump Down test and the Trunk Lift.



The Step/Jump down test aims to test ability to step up and jump down from/to the pilot ladder.



The Back Lift tests the strength of the pilot's back muscles which are essential for safe manoeuvring on the ladder.

The Physical Assessment also includes a screening assessment to ensure that the pilot can complete the functional tests safely.

In addition, the Physical Assessment provides an opportunity for counselling regarding strategies for improving strength and fitness. This will ensure that pilots who might be assessed to be at the limits of the fitness for duty requirements are given appropriate guidance to restore their fitness and functioning.

### How often does a pilot have to have a Physical Assessment?

The Physical Assessments are conducted more frequently than the Health Assessments, reflecting the potential rate of decline of physical fitness and function. For pilots under 50 years of age for example, Physical Assessments are conducted every 2.5 years and Health Assessments every 5 years, so every 5 years the Physical and Health assessments will be conducted at the same time. For pilots over 50 years of age, the Physical Assessments are conducted annually.

Assessment Frequency	
Health Assessment	Physical Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At initial licensing, then</li> <li>Every five years to age 50, then</li> <li>Every two years to age 60, then</li> <li>Yearly thereafter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At initial licensing, then</li> <li>Every two and a half years to age 50, then</li> <li>Yearly thereafter</li> </ul>

### What happens if a pilot fails the Physical Assessment?

If a pilot fails the screening aspect of the assessment they will not be able to complete the functional assessment and will be classified Temporarily Unfit for Duty. This might occur, for example, if they have an existing injury or a medical risk, such as raised blood pressure. The Authorised Health Professional will communicate with the Port Authority and may refer the pilot to a medical Authorised Health Professional if required.

If a pilot fails the functional aspect of the assessment they will also be classified Temporarily Unfit for Duty and will be referred for further assessment by a medical Authorised Health Professional. This will generally occur at the same time to minimise inconvenience for the pilot and the Port Authority.

### What about Body Mass Index?

Body Mass Index is also measured as part of the Physical Assessment. It is important because of the load on the pilot's limbs when climbing the ladder and the potential load on the deckhand who is assisting.

If a pilot's BMI is between 30 and 35 kg/m<sup>2</sup> they will be counselled by the physiotherapist but will remain fit for duty. The physiotherapist may ask them to attend a review appointment to assess their progress.

If a pilot's BMI is great than 35kg/m<sup>2</sup> they will be referred to the medical Authorised Health Professional to assess for sleep apnoea – the pilot will be categorised Fit Subject to Review.

### Psychological health

During the review pilots told us that their mental health was an important consideration and that the health assessments needed to address this, as well as interface with psychological support programs.

This is acknowledged. The Work Health & Safety team at Port Authority will be working to ensure that pilots and Authorised Health Professionals are aware of the support options available.

Of relevance to this are Triggered Health Assessments which can be initiated by a pilot if they are concerned about their health. These are targeted assessments that can provide a timely opportunity to check up on health concerns between Periodic Assessments. For more information about these assessments talk to the WHS team or your Harbour Master.

### Clarity around requirements for pregnant pilots

The review also sought to provide clarity and more definitive guidance about the management of pilots who are pregnant.

While pregnancy is not a medical condition, it does carry risks in terms of the pilot's ability to safely use the pilot ladder. It also carries other risks associated with complications of later pregnancy, such as impacts on grip strength.

For these reasons, the Standard requires pregnant pilots to cease pilotage work from 26 weeks.

Pilots are also required to seek a Triggered Assessment around 13 weeks so that the Authorised Health Professional can initiate communications with the pilot's obstetric team. The pilot does not need to tell Port Authority about the reason for this Triggered Assessment, however there will ultimately be dialogue regarding leave etc.

Pilots returning to work after the birth of their baby will be required to attend a Health Assessment and a Physical Assessment to confirm their fitness for duty (Triggered Assessment).

## Preparing for your health assessment

Port Authority is keen to ensure that the management of the health assessments is efficient for pilots, the Authorised Health Professionals and the administrative staff, so you may notice some changes in the way the health assessments are managed.

Most importantly, if you have any concerns or issues about your health assessments, including concerns about how the health assessments are conducted, please speak to the Return to Work Manager who is responsible for the overall management of the health assessment program and managing interfaces with other relevant programs.

## Fasting is no longer required for blood tests

During the recent review medical experts advised that fasting is no longer required prior to pilots attending for screening blood tests. This is informed by several studies that show lipids (cholesterol) are only minimally affected by food intake. In addition, screening for diabetes is now through a non-fasting test for glycosylated haemoglobin (HbA1c) rather than a fasting glucose test.

Please make sure that you attend for the blood tests a few days before the assessment so that the results are available at the time of the assessment.

## Bring your health provider reports

It is also important that pilots bring all relevant health provider reports to the assessment, including specialist reports. If you have been unable to access an appointment with your specialist leading up to your health assessment please let the WHS team know.

Remember to also bring a list of all medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medications.

## Your privacy is important

At Port Authority we take the privacy of personal and medical information very seriously and all personnel involved in administering and managing the health assessment program are well versed in the requirements outlined in privacy and health records legislation.

In addition to the new Port Authority Privacy Policy, the content of the Standard has been revised to make it very clear what information can and cannot be shared to assist in the management of a pilot's fitness for duty.

## How will the new assessment requirements be transitioned?

Depending on your age and when you completed your last Periodic Assessment, you may be required to complete an assessment against the new Standard within the next year to 2.5 years. Please speak to your Pilot Administrator or Return to Work Manager for more details.

Health and Physical Assessments interface with several other health management programs. These interfaces will be managed by the WHS team.

