



Ref. T4/4.01

MSC.1/Circ.1206
26 May 2006

MEASURES TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS WITH LIFEBOATS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its eighty-first session 10 to 19 May 2006, recalled that at its seventy-fifth session (15 to 24 May 2002), it had considered the issue of the unacceptably high number of accidents with lifeboats in which crew were being injured, sometimes fatally, while participating in lifeboat drills and/or inspections, and noted that most accidents fell under the following categories:

- .1 failure of on-load release mechanism;
- .2 inadvertent operation of on-load release mechanism;
- .3 inadequate maintenance of lifeboats, davits and launching equipment;
- .4 communication failures;
- .5 lack of familiarity with lifeboats, davits, equipment and associated controls;
- .6 unsafe practices during lifeboat drills and inspections; and
- .7 design faults other than on-load release mechanisms.

2 Pending further consideration of the problem, the Committee approved MSC/Circ.1049 on Accidents with lifeboats, to draw the attention of manufacturers, shipowners, crews and classification societies to the personal injury and loss of life that may follow inadequate attention to the design, construction, maintenance and operation of lifeboats, davits and associated equipment and urged all concerned to take necessary action to prevent further accidents with lifeboats. It invited Member Governments to:

- .1 bring the circular to the attention of their maritime Administrations, relevant industry organizations, manufacturers, shipowners, crews and classification societies;
- .2 take the necessary action to prevent further accidents with lifeboats pending the development of appropriate IMO guidance;
- .3 ensure that:
 - .3.1 on-load release equipment used on ships flying their flag is in full compliance with the requirements of paragraphs 4.4.7.6.2.2 to 4.4.7.6.5 of the LSA Code;

- .3.2 all appropriate documentation for the maintenance and adjustment of lifeboats, launching appliances and associated equipment is available on board;
 - .3.3 personnel undertaking inspections, maintenance and adjustment of lifeboats, launching appliances and associated equipment are fully trained and familiar with these duties;
 - .3.4 maintenance of lifeboats, launching appliances and associated equipment is carried out in accordance with approved established procedures;
 - .3.5 lifeboat drills are conducted in accordance with SOLAS regulation III/19.3.3 for the purpose of ensuring that ship's personnel will be able to safely embark and launch the lifeboats in an emergency;
 - .3.6 the principles of safety and health at work apply to drills as well;
 - .3.7 personnel undertaking maintenance and repair activities are appropriately qualified;
 - .3.8 hanging-off pennants should only be used for maintenance purposes and not during training exercises;
 - .3.9 all tests required for the design and approval of life-saving appliances are conducted rigorously, according to the guidelines developed by the Organization, in order to identify and rectify any design faults at an early stage;
 - .3.10 the equipment is easily accessible for inspections and maintenance and is proven durable in harsh operational conditions, in addition to withstanding prototype tests; and
 - .3.11 the approving authorities or bodies pay close attention to proper workmanship and state-of-the-art possibilities when assessing equipment for approval; and
- 4 encourage shipowners, when undertaking maintenance and repair activities, to employ qualified personnel, preferably certified by the manufacturer.

3 Member Governments were further invited, while enforcing the provisions of SOLAS regulation IX/4.3, to ensure that the above issues are addressed through the Safety Management System of the company, as appropriate.

4 The Committee further recalled that, at its seventy-seventh session (28 May to 6 June 2003), recognizing the experience gained since the approval of the Guidelines on inspection and maintenance of lifeboat on-load release gear (MSC/Circ.614) at its sixty-second session (24 to 28 May 1993), and that the implementation of expanded and improved guidelines could contribute towards a reduction of the incidence of accidents with lifeboats, it had approved the Guidelines for periodic servicing and maintenance of lifeboats, launching appliances and on-load release gear (MSC/Circ.1093), superseding MSC/Circ.614. Taking into account subsequent amendments to SOLAS chapter III and the LSA Code, and having considered proposals by the fiftieth session of the Sub-Committee on Fire Protection, the Committee approved amendments to

the Guidelines as set out in annex 1. The Committee further noted that the guidance developed for lifeboats could also apply to the periodic servicing and maintenance of liferafts, rescue boats and fast rescue boats and their launching appliances and on-load release gear.

5 The Committee further recalled that, at its seventy-ninth session (1 to 10 December 2004), it had endorsed the intention of the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Equipment, in co-operation with the Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping, to develop further IMO guidance as envisioned in MSC/Circ.1049, and accordingly, approved the Guidance on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats (MSC/Circ.1136), as set out in annex 2. The Committee further recalled that the Guidance developed for lifeboats has relevance, in general, for emergency drills with other life-saving systems and should be taken into account when such drills are conducted. In connection with MSC/Circ.1136, and recognizing the need to provide a basic outline of essential steps to safely carry out simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats in accordance with SOLAS regulation III/19.3.3.4, and having considered proposals by the forty-seventh session of the Sub-Committee on Design and Equipment, the Committee further approved the Guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats (MSC/Circ.1137), as set out in the appendix to annex 2.

6 Having considered the need to update several of the circulars discussed above, and having considered proposals by the fiftieth session of the Sub-Committee on Fire Protection to consolidate the numerous circulars on the subject of measures to prevent accidents with lifeboats in order to better serve the mariner, the Committee approved the annexed Guidelines for periodic servicing and maintenance of lifeboats, launching appliances and on-load release gear (annex 1) and Guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats (annex 2).

7 Member Governments are invited to give effect to the annexed Guidelines as soon as possible and to bring them to the attention of shipowners, ship operators, ship-vetting organizations, ship personnel, surveyors, manufacturers and all others concerned with the inspection and maintenance of lifeboats, liferafts, rescue boats and fast rescue boats and their launching appliances and on-load release gear.

8 This circular supersedes MSC/Circ.1049, MSC/Circ.1093, MSC/Circ.1136 and MSC/Circ.1137.
