Amendments to SOLAS which came into force on 1 July 2002 include:

ISM Code - Second Phase of Implementation
AIS Transponders
Voyage Data Recorders
New rules on Fire Protection, Detection and Extinction
New High Speed Craft Code 2000

The following amendments were among others which came into force on 1 July 2002:

Asbestos prohibited in new installations

A new regulation 3-5 in SOLAS Chapter II-1 (Construction - Structure, subdivision and stability, machinery and electrical installations) prohibits the new installation of materials which contain asbestos on all ships. The regulation states that for all ships, new installation of materials which contain asbestos shall be prohibited except for varnishes used in rotary vane compressors and rotary vane vacuum pumps, watertight joints and linings used for the circulation of fluids when, at high temperature or pressure there is a risk of fire, corrosion or toxicity, and supple and flexible thermal insulation assemblies used for temperatures above 1000°C.

Record of equipment

Amendments to the annex to the Convention include revision of the details of navigational systems and equipment referred to in the records of equipment attached to the relevant safety certificate. The amendments reflect the changes introduced by the revised SOLAS chapter V.

1988 SOLAS Protocol - certificates

Amendments to the 1988 SOLAS Protocol include revision to the details of navigational systems and equipment referred to in the records of equipment attached to certificates. The amendments reflect the changes to SOLAS chapter V.

Amendments to codes

The following amendments to mandatory codes, adopted in December 2000, also enter into force on 1 July 2002:

- Amendments to the International Code for the Application of Fire Test Procedures (FTP Code) to add new parts 10 and 11 to annex 1 on tests for fire-resisting material for high-speed craft and tests for fire-resisting divisions of high-speed craft.
- Amendments to the International Safety Management Code (ISM Code) including the replacement of Chapter 13 (on certification, verification and control) with a new Chapter 13 (on certification) and additional Chapters 14 (Interim certification), 15 (Forms of certificate) and 16 (Verification); as well as a new appendix giving forms of documents and certificates.
- Amendments to the Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk (BC Code) relating to ship's cargo hoses, tank vent systems, safety equipment, operational requirements; and amendments to the Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Liquefied Gases in Bulk (GC Code) relating to ship's cargo hoses, personnel protection and operating requirements.

May 1998 amendments to SOLAS

- The following SOLAS amendments which enter into force on 1 July 2002 were adopted in 1998:
  - In Chapter II-1 - Construction - Subdivision and stability, machinery and electrical installations, visual examination of welded connections, where filling with water or a hose test are not practicable, is now allowed under regulation 14 on Construction and initial testing of watertight bulkheads, etc., in passenger ships and cargo ships.
  - In Chapter IV - Radio communications, regulation 5-1 requires Contracting Governments to ensure suitable arrangements are in place for registering Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) identities (including ship's call sign, Inmarsat identities) and making the information available 24 hours a day to Rescue Coordination Centres. Testing intervals for satellite emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs) are updated in a new paragraph 9 to regulation 15 Maintenance Requirements. A new regulation 18 on Position Updating requires automatic provision of information regarding the ship's position where two-way communication equipment is capable of providing automatically the ship's position in the distress alert. Where manual updating of the ship's position is required, this should be done not less than every four hours when the ship is underway.
  - In Chapter VI Carriage of Cargoes (Regulation 5) and Chapter VII Carriage of Dangerous Goods (Regulation 6), "all cargoes, other than solid and liquid bulk cargoes" should be loaded, stowed and secured in accordance with the Cargo Securing Manual.

Clear waters ahead for ECDIS
Regulation 19.2.2.1.3 of the new Chapter V also allows an electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) to be accepted as meeting the chart carriage requirements of the regulation.

The regulation requires all ships, irrespective of size, to carry nautical charts and nautical publications to plan and display the ship's route for the intended voyage and to plot and monitor positions throughout the voyage. But the ship must also carry back-up arrangements if electronic charts are used either fully or partially. Performance standards for electronic charts were adopted in 1995 by resolution A.817(19)), which was amended in 1996 by resolution MSC.64 (67) to reflect back-up arrangements in case of ECDIS failure. Additional amendments were made in 1998 by resolution MSC.86 (70) to permit operation of ECDIS in RCDS mode.

Enlarged Chapter V reflects growth in technology

In all, the revised SOLAS Chapter V on Safety of Navigation has 35 regulations, compared to 23 in the present Chapter V. In addition, a new Appendix to Chapter V gives rules for the management, operation and financing of the North Atlantic Ice Patrol, while the SOLAS Appendices giving an example Record of Equipment for the Passenger Ship Safety Certificate (Form F) and a Record of Equipment for the Cargo Ship Safety Equipment Certificate (Form E) are also revised to take into account the revised requirements in the new Chapter V.

SOLAS Background

Of all international conventions dealing with maritime safety, the most important is the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). It is also one of the oldest, the first version having been adopted at a conference held in London in 1914, in the wake of the Titanic disaster of 1912.

Since then there have been four other SOLAS conventions: the second was adopted in 1929 and entered into force in 1933; the third was adopted in 1948 and entered into force in 1952; the fourth was adopted (under the auspices of IMO) in 1960 and entered into force in 1965; and the present version was adopted in 1974 and entered into force in 1980. It has now been ratified by 141 countries representing 98.34 per cent of world merchant shipping tonnage.

This article is based on information from IMO Briefings 21/2002, 22/2001 and 23/2001 of 1 July 2002.