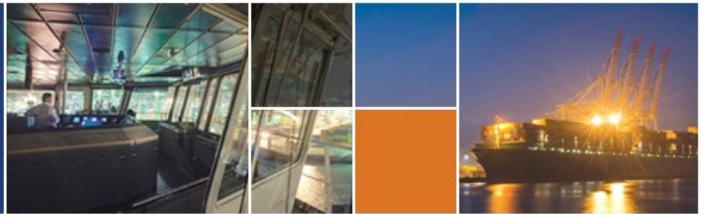




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Passenger Ship Safety - New SOLAS Regulations in Force

July 2010

A comprehensive package of amendments to the international regulations affecting new passenger ships entered into force on 1 July 2010. Increased emphasis is placed on reducing the chance of accidents occurring and on improved survivability, embracing the concept of the ship as "its own best lifeboat".

The amendments affect passenger ship regulations in the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), and came about as the result of a comprehensive review of passenger ship safety initiated in 2000 by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution from ships. The aim of the review was to assess whether the existing regulations were adequate to meet future challenges, in particular to address issues related to the increased size of passenger ships now being built. The amendments were adopted in 2006.

The guiding philosophy behind this important review was based on the dual premise that the regulatory framework should place more emphasis on the prevention of a casualty from occurring in the first place and that future passenger ships should be designed for improved survivability so that, in the event of a casualty, persons can stay safely on board, in a "safe area" as the ship proceeds to port.

The amendments include new concepts such as the incorporation of design criteria for the casualty threshold (the amount of damage a ship is able to withstand, according to the design basis, and still safely return to port) into SOLAS chapters II-1 and II-2. The amendments also provide regulatory flexibility so that ship designers can meet future safety challenges.

The amendments, which largely affect new ships built from 1 July 2010, include:

- » alternative designs and arrangements;
- » provision of safe areas and the essential systems to be maintained while a ship proceeds to port after a casualty, which will require redundancy of propulsion and other essential systems;
- » on-board safety centres, from where safety systems can be controlled, operated and monitored;
- » fixed fire detection and alarm systems, including requirements for fire detectors and manually operated call points to be capable of being remotely and individually identified;
- » fire prevention, including amendments aimed at enhancing the fire safety of atriums, the means of escape in case of fire and ventilation systems; and
- » time for orderly evacuation and abandonment, including requirements for the essential systems that must remain operational in case any one main vertical zone is unserviceable due to fire.

Other important SOLAS amendments entering into force on 1 July 2010 include the following:

December 2008 amendments to SOLAS

» *Amendments to the SOLAS Convention and to the 1988 Load Lines Protocol*

These amendments make mandatory the International Code on Intact Stability, 2008 (2008 IS Code). The 2008 IS Code provides, in a single document, both mandatory requirements and recommended provisions relating to intact stability, taking into account technical developments, in particular regarding the dynamic stability phenomena in waves, based on state-of-the-art concepts. The Code's mandatory status, under both the SOLAS Convention and the 1988 Load Lines Protocol, will significantly influence the design and the overall safety of ships.

May 2006 amendments to SOLAS

» *Amendments to SOLAS Chapter II-2 - Fire protection*

These include amendments relating to Regulation 9 - *Containment of fire*, to include a requirement for water-mist nozzles which should be tested and approved in accordance with the guidelines approved by the Organization; and to Regulation 15 - *Arrangements for oil fuel, lubricating oil and other flammable oils*, in which new text is introduced relating to the application of the regulation to ships constructed on or after 1 February 1992 and on or after 1 July 1998.

» *Amendments to SOLAS Chapter III - Life-saving appliances and arrangements*

In Regulation 7 - *Personal life-saving appliances*, the amendments add a new requirement for infant lifejackets. For passenger ships on voyages of less than 24 hours, a number of infant lifejackets equal to at least 2.5% of the number of passengers on board is to be provided; and for passenger ships on voyages of 24 hours or greater, infant lifejackets are to be provided for each infant on board. A further amendment relates to the provision of lifejackets for larger passengers and states that, if the adult lifejackets provided are not designed to fit persons with a chest girth of up to 1,750 mm, a sufficient number of suitable accessories are to be available on board to allow them to be secured to such persons.

» *Amendments to SOLAS Chapter IV - Radiocommunications*

The amendments relate to the provision of radio equipment, in Regulation 7, to require ships to carry an EPIRB capable of transmitting a distress alert through the polar orbiting satellite service (COSPAS-SARSAT) operating in the 406 MHz band; and, in Regulations 9 and 10, to clarify that the means of initiating ship-to-shore distress alerts may be through the Inmarsat geostationary satellite service by a ship earth station

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» *Amendments to SOLAS Chapter V - Safety of navigation*

The amendment adds a new paragraph to Regulation 22 - *Navigation bridge visibility* to allow ballast water exchange at sea, provided that the master has determined that it is safe to do so and takes into consideration any increased blind sectors or reduced horizontal fields of vision resulting from the operation to ensure that a proper lookout is maintained at all times. The operation should be conducted in accordance with the ship's ballast water management plan, taking into account the recommendations on ballast water exchange. The commencement and termination of the operation should be recorded in the ship's record of navigational activities.

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Further information about SOLAS is available on the IMO website at: www.imo.org