

Life-saving appliances: new IMO procedures for maintenance and inspection

With effect from 1 January 2020 amendments to SOLAS regulations III/3 and III/20 will come into force.

WHY ARE THE AMENDMENTS IMPORTANT?

The amendments are important as they require shipowners and operators to prepare for the new requirements and update onboard procedures. Additionally, an overview should be created of authorized service providers in the applicable areas before they enter into force.

WHAT IS AIMED TO BE ACHIEVED WITH THE AMENDMENTS?

The new requirements aim to address longstanding issues and avoid accidents with survival craft. They will introduce mandatory new requirements for the maintenance and inspection of lifeboats, rescue boats, launching appliances and release gear which should be carried out by certified personnel. Detailed information can be found at

<http://www.imo.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/IndexofIMOResolutions/Maritime-Safety-Committee-%28MSC%29/Documents/MSC.402%2896%29.pdf>

In summary it addresses the following items:

EQUIPMENT covered by the new requirements include:

- lifeboats (including free-fall lifeboats), rescue boats and fast rescue boats; and
- launching appliances and on-load and off-load release gear for lifeboats (including primary and secondary means of launching appliances for free-fall lifeboats), rescue boats, fast rescue boats and davit-launched life rafts.

WEEKLY AND MONTHLY inspections and routine maintenance of such equipment must be carried out by authorized service providers, or by shipboard personnel under the direction of a senior ship's officer in accordance with the maintenance manual(s).

ANNUAL thorough examinations and operational tests must be carried out by certified personnel of either the manufacturer or an authorized service provider. The service provider may be the ship operator, provided they are authorized.

FIVE-YEAR thorough examination, any overhaul, overload operational tests and repairs of such equipment, must be carried out by certified personnel of either the manufacturer or an authorized service provider.

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AUTHORIZED service providers are entities authorized by the flag administration in accordance with Sections 3 and 7 of Resolution MSC.402(96). It is important to note that the requirements apply equally to manufacturers when they are acting as authorized service providers.

CERTIFICATION is issued by authorized service providers to their personnel. Each authorized service provider must certify its personnel for each make and type of equipment to be worked on, as well as for the specific work activities to be carried out, such as annual or five-yearly inspections. Completion of relevant education and training, including a competence assessment using the equipment for which the personnel are to be certified, is a prerequisite for certification.

Further details of the required inspections and operational tests can be found in Section 6 of Resolution MSC.402(96). Instructions for on-board maintenance are described in SOLAS regulation III/36.

WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN?

It is recommended to take good notice of the new requirements, update on board procedures and create an overview of authorized service providers before the amendments enter into force on January 1st, 2020.

It is also a good opportunity to review and update onboard crew training. Regular and consequent training will increase safety awareness and crew competence. Various studies have identified that the lack thereof is an important contributing factor in many lifeboat and rescue boat accidents.

QUESTIONS?

Should you have any questions following this information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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