

MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE  
97th session  
Agenda item 19

MSC 97/19/4  
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## WORK PROGRAMME

### Draft amended guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats

Submitted by the Marshall Islands, Liberia, New Zealand, Panama, ICS, BIMCO, OCIMF, IFDMA, INTERTANKO, P & I Clubs, INTERCARGO, InterManager, IPTA, IMCA, ITF and NI

#### SUMMARY

*Executive summary:* The Maritime Safety Committee, at its ninety-sixth session, endorsed the decision taken at the third session of the Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment (SSE) that a detailed review of the draft MSC circular on *Guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats* and the draft amendments to MSC.1/Circ.1205 is needed in order to capture possible inconsistencies emanating from the *Requirements for maintenance, thorough examination, operational testing, overhaul and repair of lifeboats and rescue boats, launching appliances and release gear* (resolution MSC.402(96)). This document proposes that consideration of this matter by the SSE Sub-Committee should also include consideration of industry-developed guidelines entitled "Draft amended guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats".

*Strategic direction:* 5.1

*High-level action:* 5.1.2

*Output:* 5.1.2.1

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 12

*Related documents:* MSC 95/22; SSE 3/4, SSE 3/4/1, SSE 3/4/2, SSE 3/4/3, SSE 3/WP.3, SSE 3/16 and MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1

#### General

1 This document is submitted in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 6.12.5 of the *Guidelines on the organization and method of work of the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee and their subsidiary bodies* (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.4/Rev.4).

2 Document MSC 83/INF.15 advised the Committee of the formation of the Industry Lifeboat Group (ILG). Many of the ILG members have co-sponsored the present document and, as a group, coordinated the input to IMO of relevant views and positions of LSA users and operators within the shipping industry.

3 This document proposes that the scope of the work remaining under agenda item 4 of the provisional agenda for SSE 4 (i.e. to conduct a detailed review of the draft MSC circular on *Guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats* and the draft amendments to MSC.1/Circ.1205) should include consideration of industry-developed guidelines entitled "Draft amended guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats".

## Background

4 The Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment (SSE), at its third session, considered document SSE 3/4 (IACS) proposing amendments to SOLAS regulation III/20.11.2 and the draft MSC resolution on *Requirements for maintenance, thorough examination, operational testing, overhaul and repair of lifeboats and rescue boats, launching appliances and release gear*, with a view to addressing the recommendation, set out in the report of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) on the unintentional release of the free-fall lifeboat from the ship **Aquarosa**, that the simulation equipment (e.g. wires) used for maintenance and testing should be approved and designed to take into account the lifeboat's static weight as well as the shock loading that would be experienced during a simulated launching. In considering the IACS proposal and noting that no specific text had been proposed, the Sub-Committee invited IACS to submit a further proposal to III 3 for consideration under the agenda item on "Lessons learned and safety issues identified from the analysis of marine safety investigation reports" (SSE 3/16, paragraph 4.14).

5 MSC 96 adopted the *Requirements for maintenance, thorough examination, operational testing, overhaul and repair of lifeboats and rescue boats, launching appliances and release gear* (resolution MSC.402(96)) and related amendments to SOLAS chapter III (resolution MSC.404(96)); and agreed that they will enter into force on 1 January 2020. The adoption of the new MSC resolution and related SOLAS amendments is welcomed as the culmination of many sessions work by different bodies within the Organization. However, some ongoing work, notably to review the guidelines within MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1, remains to be carried out together with the draft amendments to MSC.1/Circ.1205.

6 While MSC 96 endorsed the outcome of SSE 3, the Committee also noted that it had not been possible to conduct a detailed review of the draft MSC circular on *Guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats* and the draft amendments to MSC.1/Circ.1205. It was, therefore, agreed that this work should be carried out by SSE 4, in order to capture any inconsistencies emanating from the *Requirements for maintenance, thorough examination, operational testing, overhaul and repair of lifeboats and rescue boats, launching appliances and release gear* (resolution MSC.402(96)). In anticipation of the work item being agreed, SSE 3 had previously invited Member Governments and international organizations to submit comments and proposals to SSE 4.

## Discussion

7 Despite efforts to reduce lifeboat accidents, which, in 2006, led to the development of MSC.1/Circ.1206 and, subsequently (in 2009), MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1, including annex 2 (Guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats) and, in particular, its appendix (Guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats), serious lifeboat accidents still occur. Apart from the tragic consequences of injury and even death associated with such accidents, masters and crews are widely reported to have serious concern relating to the risk of injury

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and their safety when carrying out mandatory free-fall lifeboat drills. Such a concern has in a number of cases resulted in a reluctance by ship's crew members to enter free-fall lifeboats to conduct mandatory drills.

8 Incidents that occurred during maintenance or abandon ship drills that caused injury include the unintentional release of the free-fall lifeboat from the **Aquarosa** as reported by the ATSB (see paragraph 4 above); the failure of lifting slings on the **Da Dan Xia** as reported by the New Zealand Marine inquiry MO-2014-202; the accidental release of the davit locking device on the **Louise Russ** leading to serious injury; and the fatal accident on the jack-up rig **Ensco 104** in October 2014.

9 With the goal of better understanding the causes of free-fall lifeboat accidents and developing proposals to address them, section 2.4 (Free-fall lifeboats) and the appendix (Guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats) of annex 2 to MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1 have been reviewed by the ILG members. This work has led to industry developed draft amendments to the above Guidelines that, if implemented, would increase the safety of mandatory lifeboat drills for free-fall lifeboats. The ILG members also consider that an increase of free-fall lifeboat safety by reducing accidents would improve the confidence of masters and crews regarding this essential safety equipment and would reduce the reluctance to participate in mandatory lifeboat drills.

10 In reviewing the *Guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats* (MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1, annex 2, appendix) the definition of "simulated launching" was carefully considered. The co-sponsors consider that the current definition and requirement for "simulated launching", which includes activation of the release mechanism while the lifeboat remains restrained at or close to the stowed position, should be amended to ensure that during mandatory drills the release mechanism is not activated. The proposed amendment will provide an additional level of risk control during drills by avoiding activation of the release mechanism that, either through design deficiencies, insufficient or incorrect maintenance or a failure to appropriately follow procedures, has been shown to be a central factor in numerous accidents.

11 It is proposed that, the Committee instruct the SSE Sub-Committee as follows:

"That at its next session, when conducting a detailed review of the draft MSC circular on *Guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats* and the draft amendments to MSC.1/Circ.1205, shall include consideration of industry developed draft amendments to the Guidelines, to be submitted to that session of the Sub-Committee."

#### **Action requested of the Committee**

12 The Committee is requested to consider the issues discussed in paragraphs 7 to 10 and the proposal in paragraph 11, and decide as appropriate.

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