

MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
88th session
Agenda item 7

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SHIP DESIGN AND EQUIPMENT

Testing of free-fall lifeboats

Submitted by the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS)

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document brings to the attention of the Committee what appears to be an inconsistency concerning the testing of free-fall lifeboats release systems

Strategic direction: 2

High-level action: 2.0.1

Planned output: 2.0.1.25

Action to be taken: Paragraph 9

Related documents: Resolution MSC.216(82) and MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1

Introduction

1 Amendments to SOLAS chapter III as contained in annex 1 to resolution MSC.216(82) concern various requirements related to free-fall lifeboats (FFLB), i.e.:

- .1 amendments to SOLAS regulation III/19.3.3.4 pertain to the emergency training and drills required for FFLBs; and
- .2 amendments to SOLAS regulation III/20.11.2 now require annual and five-year testing of FFLB release systems, as has been required for lifeboat on-load release gear.

2 Also, it is noted that guidelines for simulated launching are provided in MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1.

Discussion

3 The amendments to SOLAS regulation III/19.3.3.4 referred to in paragraph 1 above allow, as an alternative to free-fall launching, the lowering of the FFLB by the secondary means of launching at three-month intervals, and then simulated launching at six-month intervals. There is no requirement in this regulation that would mandate free-fall launching as the only option.

4 The amendments to SOLAS regulation III/20.11 referred to in paragraph 1 above, now require FFLB release systems to undergo annual thorough examinations and operational testing. This can be understood to mean, but does not explicitly require, free-fall launching, considering that the test of the release system could be performed by using the mechanism used for simulated launching.

5 In addition to the annual testing required by amended SOLAS regulation III/20.11, FFLB release systems are also required to be tested at five-year intervals, *"under a load of 1.1 times the total mass of the lifeboat when loaded with its full complement of persons and equipment whenever the release ...[system]... is overhauled."*

6 The test described in paragraph 5 above implies that the FFLB is to be free-fall launched (not simulated). However, depending on the capacity of the mechanism that would be used for simulated launching to withstand the 110% load, it might be possible to perform the 110% load test without free-fall launching of the FFLB.

Clarification requested

7 Accordingly, while the tests now required of FFLB release systems may be carried out by free-fall launching of the boat, this does not appear to be explicitly required by the regulations. IACS therefore considers it necessary to clarify whether it is the intention of the regulations to allow the various operational tests to be performed without requiring free-fall launching of the FFLB.

8 The Committee is invited to note that the contents of this document have been submitted to the fifty-fourth session of the DE Sub-Committee, with the view that comments from the experts at the DE Sub-Committee would benefit and facilitate the Committee in determining a proper course of action.

Action requested of the Committee

9 The Committee is invited to consider clarifying the test required for free-fall lifeboats as proposed in paragraph 7 above, taking into account any comments that may become available from the DE Sub-Committee as discussed in paragraph 8 above.
