



Office of
Deputy Commissioner
of Maritime Affairs

THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
LIBERIA MARITIME AUTHORITY

Marine Notice

SAF-004
Rev. 06/12

**TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF
MERCHANT SHIPS, AGENTS AND RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS**

SUBJECT: Lifeboat Casualties/Drills

Reference: (a) **Maritime Regulation 10.296 (5)**
(b) **SOLAS '74, Regulations III/19 and III/25**
(c) **MSC Resolution 152 (78)**
(d) **MSC Circular 1136**
(e) **MSC Circular 1137**
(f) **MSC Circular 1206/Rev.1**

Supersedes: Marine Notice SAF-004, dated 04/05

PURPOSE:

This Notice is provided to describe the requirements regarding the launching of freefall lifeboats and conducting abandon ship drills. It was developed in response to a number of serious and fatal accidents which occurred during abandon ship drills. As a result of these casualties, the Maritime Safety Committee has altered the requirements related to the manning of lifeboats during abandon ship drills and the launching of free fall lifeboats. The regulations were created to provide the officers and crew with confidence in the equipment designed to save their lives in an emergency, and to prevent further injuries and casualties.

After the MSC meeting in May of 2002, the Maritime Safety Committee identified several causes for these accidents. Special attention should be paid to the following:

- Failure of on-load mechanism,
- Inadvertent operation of on load mechanism,
- Inadequate maintenance of lifeboats, davits and launching equipment,
- Communication failure,
- Lack of familiarity with the lifeboats, davits, equipment and associated controls,
- Unsafe practices during lifeboat drills and inspections, and
- Design faults other than on-load release.

In November 2002, after investigating several accidents resulting from lifeboat drills on Liberian Flag vessels over a period of three years, this Administration issued changes to its existing requirement for weekly abandon ship drills providing for the reduced frequency of the launching of free fall life boats in Marine Notice SAF-004 Rev.11-02. In that Notice, we dropped the

requirement for a weekly lifeboat drill and substituted weekly safety training. This revision is based on our analysis which indicated that many of the injuries would have been avoided had the officers and crew received proper training in the use of the equipment on board their ship before participating in the drill. We also determined that the launching of free fall life boats should only be done in a very controlled environment. Further, we have concluded a simulated launch provides the same checks of the launching apparatus and crew training as does launching of freefall lifeboats while reducing the risk of an accident.

On 20 May 2004 the IMO adopted reference (c), which revised the requirements for testing free fall lifeboats and conducting abandon ship drills. This revision is designed to incorporate the changes advanced by references (d) and (e), both of which have been superseded by reference (f) issued in June 2009, to encourage improved procedures. It has always been the intent of these regulations that when there is an emergency the officers and crew will have sufficient training and thus have confidence to safely deploy the lifesaving equipment provided to save their lives through proper training.

The responsible person in charge involved in the lowering or launching of the lifeboat shall:

- Be thoroughly trained and familiar with the equipment and the manufacturer's instructions,
- Ensure equipment has been thoroughly and completely examined prior to conducting the drill
- Establish clear communications with all persons involved in the drill, and
- Emphasize the value of the drill as a learning experience not just as a task to be completed in order to meet regulatory requirements.

APPLICABILITY:

This Notice applies to Owners, Masters, Ships Officers, Nautical Inspectors, and Classification Society Surveyors when performing drills and surveys on board Liberian flagships. It also addresses several SOLAS requirements, which have been established by the Office of the Deputy Commissioner.

REQUIREMENTS:

1.0 Drills

SOLAS and Liberian Maritime Regulations require **each** member of the crew on board cargo ships to participate in at least one abandon ship and one fire and emergency drill each month. Passenger ships must perform at least one abandon ship and one fire and emergency drill each week. In addition, SOLAS and Liberian Maritime Regulations require that lifeboats must be maneuvered in the water once every three months and:

- Davit lifeboats shall be launched at least once every three months, and
- Free fall lifeboats either the free-fall method or simulated free fall at least every six months (see the guidance for simulated free fall launching provided in reference (f)).

1.1. In order to minimize risk of injury and loss of life while conducting **DRILLS** and while performing tests and maintenance on board lifeboats, the following principles is identified in reference (f) should be followed.

- 1.1.1. The lifeboats and the lifeboat launching equipment shall be thoroughly checked by trained crewmen before the drill to ensure all systems will operate properly.
- 1.1.2. Crewmembers should be thoroughly trained in and familiar with the functioning, operation and maintenance requirements of the specific type of launching arrangements installed on board.
- 1.1.3. Emphasis shall be on safety and learning. Lessons learned in the course of a drill should be documented and made a part of follow-up shipboard training discussions and planning the next drill session.
- 1.1.4. The lowering of a boat with its full complement of persons is an example of an element of a drill that may, depending on the circumstances, involve an unnecessary risk. Such drills should only be carried out if special precautions are observed.
- 1.1.5. To more closely follow the requirements of SOLAS, the Liberian regulation requiring weekly fire and boat drills was amended to require weekly fire and boat drills for passenger vessels and the crew to attend fire and boat drills on cargo vessels once a month supplemented with weekly safety training sessions which should include training in one or more of the following subjects over a six month period:

Safety Management System	Portable Fire Extinguishers	Fire main/fire fighting	Fixed Fire Extinguishing Systems
Self Contained Breathing Apparatus	Thermal Protective Aids, Ring Buoys, Life Jackets, and Exposure Suits	Launching Lifeboats and liferafts	Lifeboat/liferaft Emergency Equipment
EPIRBs & other Emergency Communication Equipment	Flares and other Emergency Signals	First Aid (including CPR)	Line Throwing Apparatus
Entering Enclosed Spaces	Pollution Response	Man Overboard Response	Response to spills of Hazardous Materials on board
Vessel Collision or Grounding Response	Loss of Steering	Loss of Propulsion	How to fight fires on board this vessel.
Search and Rescue assistance	Ballast Water Exchange	Waste/Garbage Management	Oily Bilge Water Management

2. Davit Launched Lifeboats Drills

- 2.1 During drills crewmembers should not be on board a lifeboat when the boat is first lowered from the stowed position.
- 2.2 The launch shall be carried out under the supervision of a responsible person who should be an officer experienced in such procedures.
- 2.3 The responsible person shall establish and maintain good communication with the assigned operating crew.

- 2.4 Open Lifeboats should first be lowered to approximately 2 meters above the water without crewmembers and then hoisted to a position where the assigned operating crew can safely board the lifeboat. Then lower the boat to the water with no more than two operating crew on board who will grasp the man ropes during the descent. The responsible person will inform the other members of his crew to find secure seating as he is about to release the boat. Once all crew are in secure positions and the boat is waterborne, the responsible person may release the falls. Additional crew, if needed, may then embark via the embarkation ladder.
- 2.5 When possible, closed lifeboats should be lowered to approximately 2-3 meters above the water without crewmembers on board. The lifeboat should then be raised to a suitable level for the operating crew to embark via the embarkation ladder or from the embarkation deck, whichever provides the safest access. Once all are seated and secured, the responsible person may again direct the boat to be lowered to the water. Once waterborne, the responsible person will inform the other members of his or her crew to stay seated as he is about to release the boat. Once the responsible person is sure all crewmen are in a secure position, he or she may release the boat from inside.
- 2.6 Once waterborne the boats shall be operated in the water and if fitted with a motor the motor shall be operated.
- 2.7 The lifeboat shall then be brought alongside for recovery by the operating crew. Under the direction of the responsible person the lifeboat shall be readied to be hoisted.
- 2.8 The responsible person shall ensure the lifeboat is fully and correctly engaged with the recovery system and all unnecessary persons have disembarked the lifeboat using the embarkation ladder before the lifeboat is raised.
- 2.9 The responsible person shall make sure the lifeboat is properly raised and stowed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Note: The operational crew is defined as the minimum number of persons (two to three people) needed to release the boat once lowered into the water, operate the boat and provide assistance to recover the boat once launched.

3. Free-Fall Lifeboats Drills

- 3.1 Free-fall lifeboats should be exercised for drills similar to closed lifeboats. They are required to be operated in the water at intervals not exceeding three months and are to be launched by either the free-fall method or simulated free fall at least every six months (see the guidance for simulated free fall launching provided in reference (f)), unless a dispensation has been granted by the Administration to conduct a launch only once every 12 months (see section 5 below).
- 3.2 Each crewmember should either be on board the lifeboat to participate in a free-fall launch within six months of assignment to the vessel or within the last year they shall have received training at an approved facility where said crewman experienced at least one free fall launch during a drill at the facility.

- 3.3 There shall be an area astern of the ship which is free of any obstructions or objects the freefall lifeboats projected path for a distance of at least one and one half times the distance the freefall lifeboat is expected to travel before it comes to a standstill after being launched.
- 3.4 When performing a free-fall launch drill the boat should first be lowered to the water, motor tested etc., then raised and restowed. The boat shall then be launched by the free-fall method.
- 3.5 Prior to a free-fall launching the rescue boat should be launched and ready to act as a standby boat to assist the free-fall lifeboat and in re-securing.

4.0 Guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats (from reference (f)):

The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide a basic outline of essential steps to safely carry out simulated launching. These Guidelines are general; the lifeboat manufacturer's instruction manual should always be consulted before conducting simulated launching. Simulated launching should only be carried out with lifeboats and launching appliances designed to accommodate it, and for which the manufacturer has provided instructions. Simulated launching should be carried out under the supervision of a responsible person who should be an officer experienced in such procedures.

- 4.1 Check equipment and documentation to ensure that all components of the lifeboat and launching appliance are in good operational condition.
- 4.2 Ensure that the restraining device(s) provided by the manufacturer for simulated launching are installed and secure and that the free-fall release mechanism is fully and correctly engaged.
- 4.3 Establish and maintain good communication between the assigned operating crew and the responsible person.
- 4.4 Disengage lashings, gripes, etc., installed to secure the lifeboat for sea or for maintenance, except those required for simulated free-fall.
- 4.5 Participating crew board the lifeboat and fasten their seatbelts under the supervision of the responsible person.
- 4.6 All crew, except the assigned operating crew, disembark the lifeboat. The assigned operating crew fully prepares the lifeboat for free-fall launch and secures themselves in their seats for the release operation.
- 4.7 The assigned operating crew activates the release mechanism when instructed by the responsible person. Ensure that the release mechanism operates satisfactorily and, if applicable, the lifeboat travels down the ramp to the distance specified in the manufacturer's instructions.
- 4.8 Resecure the lifeboat to its stowed position, using the means provided by the manufacturer and ensure that the free-fall release mechanism is fully and correctly engaged.
- 4.9 Repeat procedures from 4.7 above, using the back-up release mechanism when applicable.

- 4.10 The assigned operating crew disembarks the lifeboat.
- 4.11 Ensure that the lifeboat is returned to its normal stowed condition. Remove any restraining and/or recovery devices used only for the simulated launch procedure.

5.0 Requesting a dispensation from launching a lifeboat:

In accordance with Regulation III/19.3.3.4 of reference (b), the operators of vessels fitted with lifeboats may request the flag Administration issue a dispensation to only launch the lifeboat(s) once a year when the vessel is operating in areas where port restrictions do not allow the operator to launch the lifeboat(s) or they cannot safely launch the lifeboat(s) due to local severe wind, weather, or sea conditions. With this dispensation, the vessel will be required to lower the lifeboats when practicable to the water by other means and to maneuver the lifeboats in the water once every three months.

To receive the dispensation the vessel operator must contact the Technical Department at the Liberian International Ship and Corporate Registry. The request may be sent by regular mail, fax or email to the following address:

LISCR, LLC
Attn: Marine Safety
8619 Westwood Center Drive,
Vienna, VA 22182
Tel: +1-703-790-3434
Fax: + 1-703-790-5655
Email: technical@liscr.com

Note: the request must identify the vessel by name, and clearly describe the ships trading pattern or the environmental conditions that are the reason the dispensation should be granted.

6.0 General Safety Precautions Concerning Lifeboats

- 6.1 It is of the utmost importance that the officers and crewmembers are familiar with and confident that they will be able to safely use the lifesaving apparatus.
- 6.2 When servicing davits in the stowed position, the Harbor Safety Pins or other similar safety devices must be in place to ensure the davits cannot be accidentally moved.
- 6.3 When personnel are in the stowed lifeboats, the hanging-off pendants should be used to prevent the boat from being accidentally released and dropped from the releasing gear.
- 6.4 All launching apparatus should receive regular maintenance by persons who are familiar with and able to follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- 6.5 Checklists should be developed and used to ensure that all safety precautions are in place before personnel perform maintenance or inspections.

- 6.6 Checklists should be developed and used to ensure that standard safety precautions and operating procedures are followed including proper stowing/securing after use.
- 6.7 No additional securing arrangements should be used which are not included in the lowering/free-fall instructions except for additional securing devices during extreme heavy weather, which must be removed as soon as the weather moderates.

These standard procedures should be included in each vessel's safety management system as applicable.

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