



Technical Circular

No.: 004/2014

Date: 15 January 2014

Subject: Operational test of freefall lifeboat.

To Whomsoever it may concern

The IMO adopted on 24 May 2012 an amendment to SOLAS regulation III/20.11.2.4 under resolution MSC.325(90) for free-fall lifeboats which allows the simulated launching instead of normal free-fall launch during the annual operational test and the 5-year overhaul survey.

It is required that lifeboats should be operated regularly to ensure they operate when needed and that crew knows how to operate them. For testing of free-fall lifeboats, a physical launch might not always be appropriate, e.g. due to berthing position or obstacles behind the vessel. The amendment, which entered into force on 1st January 2014, permits operational testing of free-fall lifeboats to be performed either by free-fall launch, or by a simulated launch in accordance with the appendix in MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1 which is mentioned below.

SIMULATED LAUNCHING OF FREE-FALL LIFEBOATS

Simulated launching is carried out with the aim of:

1. Training the crew in the free-fall release procedures
2. Verifying the satisfactory function of the free fall release system without letting the boat fall into the sea.

Procedure for simulated launching: Simulated launching should be carried out under the supervision of a responsible person who should be an officer experienced in such procedures. Manufacturer's instruction manual should always be followed for such simulated launching; however a typical simulated launching sequence may be as follows:

- a) Check equipment and documentation to ensure that all components of the lifeboat and launching appliance are in good operational condition.
- b) 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.
- c) Establish and maintain good communication between the assigned operating crew (minimum number of crew required in the boat for its safe operation including disengaging and engaging the boat to launching appliance, where applicable) and the responsible person.

- d) Disengage lashings, gripes, etc. installed to secure the lifeboat for sea or for maintenance, except those required for simulated free-fall.
- e) Participating crew board the lifeboat and fasten their seatbelts under the supervision of the responsible person.
- f) 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.
- g) The assigned operating crew activates the release mechanism when instructed by the responsible person. Ensure that the release mechanism operates satisfactorily and the lifeboat travels down the ramp to the distance specified in the manufacturer's instructions.
- h) Recover 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.
- i) Repeat procedures from "g" above, using the back-up release mechanism when applicable.
- j) The assigned operating crew disembarks the lifeboat.
- k) 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.

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