

Republic of the Marshall Islands

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY No. 08-23

To: Owners/Operators, Masters, Nautical Inspectors, Recognized Organizations

Subject: IMMERSION SUIT DEFECTS

Date: 23 June 2023

This Marine Safety Advisory (MSA) reaffirms the importance of proper inspections and maintenance of immersion suits on board Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)-flagged vessels. It supersedes MSA No. 09-21.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The RMI Maritime Administrator (the “Administrator”) previously promulgated MSA No. 18-19 (2019) and MSA No. 09-21 (2021) which both addressed inspection and maintenance of immersion suits. Since issuing these MSAs, the Administrator continues to observe a significant number of deficiencies (both during flag and port State inspections) relating to the condition of immersion suits.

2.0 IMMERSION SUIT DEFICIENCIES

2.1 Since 1 January 2023, immersion suit defects account for nearly one-third of all lifesaving related deficiencies issued during flag State inspections of RMI-flagged ships. Commonly observed defects include:

- .1 defective or inoperable zippers;
- .2 failed seams;
- .3 holes or other defects in immersion suit material;
- .4 inoperative or missing light and/or whistle; and
- .5 overdue air pressure testing.

2.2 Deteriorated or inoperable zippers account for the largest percentage of observed defects. Defects of the zipper rarely affect only one immersion suit on board. Many times, numerous suits are found with the same defect when closely examined following the identification of one unacceptable immersion suit.

2.3 Defects or failures of seams of immersion suits are the next most commonly observed defect. Deficiencies issued following flag State inspections indicate that the seams at the hands, feet, and zipper are most susceptible to failure. Similar to defective zippers, the

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Administrator's records indicate that seam failure rarely is found isolated to only one immersion suit, often with many found on board in the same condition.

- 2.4 Issues related to the overall condition of immersion suits on board RMI-flagged vessels are often identified during inspections. This includes deterioration or defects in the suit's material, overdue air pressure testing, and missing or inoperable light and/or whistle (for suits designed to be worn without a lifejacket).
- 2.5 In several instances, immersion suits manufactured in China by "Dongtai City Jianghai Lifesaving & Firefighting Equipment Limited Company" and "DongTai City Dong Fang Marine Fitting Co., Ltd.," were found to be significantly deteriorated despite being only about five years old.

3.0 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 3.1 The Administrator recommends that all owners, operators, Masters, and crewmembers of RMI-flagged vessels take the following actions to raise awareness of the importance of properly inspecting and maintaining immersion suits:
 - 3.1.1 Review the requirements on immersion suits and thermal protective aids contained in RMI Marine Notice [2-011-37](#), *Life Saving Appliances and Systems*;
 - 3.1.2 Review the requirements prescribed by the Company's safety management system (SMS) relating to the periodic (monthly) inspection of all immersion suits to ensure they adequately address the requirements contained in IMO Circular [MSC/Circ.1047](#);
 - 3.1.3 Ensure zippers are fully closed and opened during monthly check to ensure smooth operation throughout the zipper's length;
 - 3.1.4 Ensure crewmembers responsible for conducting periodic inspections of immersion suits are properly trained and knowledgeable in the inspection procedure;
 - 3.1.5 Review the requirements prescribed by the Company's SMS relating to air pressure testing of all immersion suits to ensure they adequately address the requirements contained in IMO Circular [MSC/Circ.1114](#);
 - 3.1.6 Confirm that the number of immersion suits required on the Safety Equipment Certificate Form E are on board, in serviceable condition, and immediately available at the locations prescribed in RMI Marine Notice 2-011-37;
 - 3.1.7 Ensure that all crewmembers are familiar with the location on board where immersion suits are stored; and
 - 3.1.8 Immediately notify the Administrator if defective immersion suits are identified and the number of immersion suits in satisfactory condition does not meet that required by Form E.