
Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances for Ships of Classes III to VI(A)) (Amendment) Regulations 2001

Notice to Shipowners, Certifying Authorities, Shipbuilders, Shiprepairers, Ship masters and Surveyors.

This notice should be read in conjunction with Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances for Ships of Classes III to VI(A)) Regulations 1999 SI 2732, as amended, and with Merchant Shipping Notice 1676(M), and comes into force on 14 August 2001.

This Merchant Shipping Notice is an integral part of the Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances (Amendment) Regulations 2001, and amends Merchant Shipping Notice 1676(M) in respect of Schedule 11.

Summary

The purpose of this Merchant Shipping Notice is to specify -

- the requirements for emergency communications equipment on Class V vessels, in support of the Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances for Ships of Classes III to VI(A)) Regulations 1999 SI 2732 regulation 7(6)(a) as amended ; and
- the requirements for a general emergency alarm on vessels of classes IV to VI(A), in support of the goal setting requirements of regulations 6(9)(a), 7(3)(b), 7(7)(i), 7(11)(i), 8(2)(e)(i) and 8(3)(e)(i).

Introduction

The Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances (Amendment) Regulations 2001 come into force on 14 August 2001.

MGN 176 (M) sets out the effects of the amending regulations. This Merchant Shipping Notice gives interpretation of the goal setting requirements in the regulations in respect of emergency communications and means of raising an emergency alarm.

Communications with Emergency Services For Class V Vessels In Category B Waters

Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances for Ships of Classes III to VI(A)) Regulations 1999 SI 2732, regulation 7(6)(a) requires every ship which carries open reversible liferafts to carry “a means of communication which is portable, waterproof

and capable in an emergency situation of making immediate contact with the emergency services for the area in which the ship is operating”.

The purpose of this provision is that, in the event of evacuation of the vessel to the liferafts, there should be a means of contacting and continuing to communicate with the relevant emergency services.

The primary means of emergency communication is and should remain VHF radio. This would be used to contact the Coastguard or local navigation authority to raise the alarm. VHF communications have the following advantages over alternatives:

- In a distress, urgency or other emergency scenario, a call on VHF radio to a specific station (eg a Coastguard Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre or Sub-Centre, or an

All-Ships call) will alert other ships or shore stations to the vessel's predicament, and they may be able to offer assistance.

- VHF Distress Channels (primarily Channel 16) are continuously monitored; an emergency call on VHF Channel 16 should therefore be heard immediately, and details can, where necessary, be passed on to the appropriate emergency service;
- If a distress call is received without any position being given, a VHF call can be traced using Directional finder equipment;
- A VHF emergency call is broadcast to any other VHF radio in radio contact; there is no need for a call to be directed to a specific recipient.
- In the event that SAR vessels and aircraft are required for search and rescue, VHF radio can communicate directly with the SAR unit.

However there are "blind" areas for VHF, and where a vessel may operate partially in such areas, an alternative means of emergency communication may be necessary IN ADDITION to portable VHF radios. This may include a mobile phone, provided that a reliable signal is available in the area in question, and an appropriate recipient for calls is identified, who will be available to answer calls whenever the vessel is operating.

If there are no VHF Communications in the area of operation of a passenger vessel (eg on inland waterways where there is very little vessel traffic), suitable arrangements for communications must be agreed with the local emergency services.

Under the MS (Co-operation with Search and Rescue Services) Regulations 1998, every passenger ship is required to agree a search and rescue co-operation plan (SAR plan) with the appropriate emergency services. The SAR plan is approved by the local Regional Inspector of HM Coastguard. The SAR plan must include details of emergency communication arrangements. The approval procedures for SAR plans will ensure that a suitable means of communication is selected for each vessel, in the light of local circumstances.

General Emergency Alarms

Regulations 6(9)(a), 7(3)(b), 7(7)(i), 7(11)(i), 8(2)(e)(i) and 8(3)(e)(i) of the Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances for Ships of Classes III to VI(A)) Regulations as amended, require every ship to be provided with "a general emergency alarm system, or a public address system which can be used for broadcasting a general emergency alarm and which complies with the requirements of Merchant Shipping Notice No. M 1676 as amended by [this] Merchant Shipping Notice No.1757 (M)".

The criteria for General emergency alarms and public address systems are given in Schedule 11 of MSN 1676(M). Those criteria continue to apply except that, for vessels of classes III to VI(A), alternatives to a powered whistle or siren are acceptable. On a small ship, an announcement using the public address system would be acceptable, provided that, on every vessel carrying more than 20 passengers, the safety announcement at the start of each voyage informs passengers how an emergency alarm would be raised.

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