Maritime and Coastguard Agency

MERCHANT SHIPPING NOTICE

MSN 1781 (M+F)
(Amendment)

The Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1996 - Amendments to Annex IV (Distress Signals)

Notice to all Owners, Masters, Skippers, Officers and Crews of Merchant Ships, Fishing Vessels, Pleasure Vessels, Yachts and Other Seagoing Craft.

This notice should be read in conjunction with MSN 1781 (M+F) as amended

PLEASE NOTE:-
Where this document provides guidance on the law it should not be regarded as definitive. The way the law applies to any particular case can vary according to circumstances - for example, from vessel to vessel and you should consider seeking independent legal advice if you are unsure of your own legal position.

Summary

- This notice details amendments to Annex IV of the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGs). These amendments have been adopted by the International Maritime Organisation's(IMO) Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) and will come into force in the United Kingdom on 1 December 2009.

1. Introduction

1.1 International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972(COLREGS) Convention is given legal effect in United Kingdom legislation through the Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1996 (SI 1996 No.75).

1.2 The amendments in this notice relate to three sets of changes to Section 1 of Annex IV of the Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 which were adopted by the IMO Maritime Safety Committee at its 82nd session came into force for implementation in the United Kingdom on 1 December 2009.

2. Amendments to Annex IV of International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, as amended (COLREGs), arising from IMO Resolution A. 1004 (25), adopted on 29 November 2007 which result in revisions to MSN 1781 (M+F) as amended.

ANNEX

AMENDMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS FOR PREVENTING COLLISIONS AT SEA, 1972, AS AMENDED

Annex IV

Distress signals

1 The following signals, used or exhibited either together or separately, indicate distress and need of assistance:

(a) a gun or other explosive signals fired at intervals of about a minute;
(b) a continuous sounding with any fog-signalling apparatus;
(c) rockets or shells, throwing red stars fired one at a time at short intervals;
(d) **a signal made by any signalling method consisting of the group ... --- ... (SOS) in the Morse Code;**
(e) a signal sent by radiotelephony consisting of the spoken word .MAYDAY.;
(f) the International Code Signal of distress indicated by N.C.;
(g) a signal consisting of a square flag having above or below it a ball or anything resembling a ball;
(h) flames on the vessel (as from a burning tar barrel, oil barrel, etc.);
(i) a rocket parachute flare or a hand-flare showing a red light;
(j) a smoke signal giving off orange-coloured smoke;
(k) slowly and repeatedly raising and lowering arms outstretched to each side;
(l) **a distress alert by means of digital selective calling (DSC) transmitted on:**
(i) VHF channel 70, or
(ii) MF/HF on the frequencies 2187.5 kHz, 8414.5 kHz, 4207.5 kHz, 6312 kHz, 12577 kHz or 16804.5 kHz;
(m) **a ship-to-shore distress alert transmitted by the ship's Inmarsat or other mobile satellite service provider ship earth station;**
(n) signals transmitted by emergency position-indicating radio beacons;
(o) approved signals transmitted by radiocommunications systems, including survival craft radar transponders.

2 The use or exhibition of any of the foregoing signals, except for the purpose of indicating distress and need of assistance and the use of other signals which may be confused with any of the above signals, is prohibited.

3 Attention is drawn to the relevant sections of the International Code of Signals, the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual, Volume III and the following signals:
(a) a piece of orange-coloured canvas with either a black square and circle or other appropriate symbol (for identification from the air);
(b) a dye marker.

More Information

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