

LOCAL VESSELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Miscellaneous Amendments to Code of Practice – Safety Standards for Class I, II and III Vessels and Code of Practice – Safety Standards for Class IV Vessels

Purpose

This paper sets out the miscellaneous amendments to the Code of Practice – Safety Standards for Class I, II and III Vessels¹, and the Code of Practice – Safety Standards for Class IV Vessels² (collectively referred to as ‘CoPs’) as proposed by the Marine Department (‘MD’).

Background

2. Dr Neville Anthony Armstrong, an expert witness appointed by the Commission of Inquiry (‘CoI’) into the Collision of Vessels near Lamma Island on 1 October 2012, made a considerable number of recommendations for enhancing the existing regulation on marine safety for local vessels in his Expert Report (Part 2) (‘Dr Armstrong’s Expert Report’)³ submitted to the CoI. For recommendations which will entail greater impact or changes, separate consultations will be conducted with the industry. The other recommendations will be followed up by a series of miscellaneous amendments.

Bilge Pumps Used as Fire Pumps

3. Section 2(2)(c) in Part 1 of Schedule 4 to the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Safety and Survey) Regulation (Cap. 548G) provides that bilge pumps are among the fire pumps that comply with Schedule 4. Dr Armstrong pointed out that bilge water might contain spilt fuel oil and there was the possibility of pumping oil-contaminated bilge water onto a fire if bilge pumps were used as fire pumps. Dr Armstrong recommended stopping the use of bilge pumps as fire pumps.⁴

¹ http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/pdf/lvs_cop123.pdf

² http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/pdf/lvs_cop4.pdf

³ Dr Neville Anthony Armstrong, Expert Report (Part 2) (English version only), 5 March 2013, at http://www.coi-lamma.gov.hk/pdf/docs/Expert_Report_Part2_prepared_by_Dr_Armstrong.pdf

⁴ Dr Armstrong’s Expert Report, paragraph B-18, For Consideration 38.

4. Regarding Dr Armstrong's recommendation, MD has consulted the UK maritime experts who have provided consultancy advice on the reform of MD. The experts opined that even if a bilge pump tainted with fuel oil was used as a fire pump, the oil content would be very low and would be diluted by the large amount of pumped water afterwards. The risk of adding oil to a fire was considerably low. Besides, MD notes that the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea ('SOLAS') also permits the use of a bilge pump as a fire pump.⁵

5. MD agrees with the views of the UK maritime experts. With reference to the relevant provisions of the SOLAS, MD proposes amending the CoPs to require that for pumps used as fire pumps on local vessels which apply for an operating licence for the first time or undergo major modifications after the amendments come into effect, they should not normally be used for pumping oil and if they are used occasionally for the transfer or pumping of fuel oil, suitable change-over arrangements have to be fitted.

Storing Lifejackets in Plastic Bags

6. Dr Armstrong noted that many lifejackets remaining on board Lamma IV were stored in unmarked plastic bags held within the orange bag under the seat and they were not immediately identified as lifejackets by passengers. Furthermore, some of the lifejacket tapes were tied together and the knots were difficult to untie. Dr Armstrong recommended reviewing whether storing lifejackets in plastic bags was an acceptable practice.⁶

7. MD agrees that storing lifejackets in plastic bags could help maintain lifejackets in good condition. Having considered Dr Armstrong's recommendation and having consulted the UK maritime experts who have provided consultancy advice on the reform of MD, as well as taking into account the views raised by the Sub-committee on Survey Work of Local Vessels at its meeting on 22 October 2015, MD proposes amending the CoPs as follows:

- (a) For shipowners / operators who choose to store lifejackets individually in a plastic bag, it is required that:
 - (i) the plastic bags, if completely transparent, should be easily ripped open;

⁵ Regulation 10.2.2.1, Chapter II-2, International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea.

⁶ Dr Armstrong's Expert Report, paragraphs A-24 to A-25, For Consideration 11.

(ii) the plastic bags, if opaque or not completely transparent, should be easily ripped open and be clearly marked at a conspicuous place on the exterior that a lifejacket is contained therein; and

(b) For shipowners / operators who choose to store one or more lifejackets in an opaque or not completely transparent enclosed storage (e.g. a cabinet or a bag), it is required that at a conspicuous place on the exterior of the storage be clearly marked that lifejacket(s) is / are contained therein.

8. In carrying out vessel inspections, ship inspectors will conduct random checks on lifejackets according to the following proportions:

No. of adult lifejackets required to be provided on board by law	Random check	No. of children lifejackets required to be provided on board by law	Random check
1-10	100%	1-10	100%
11-100	10 pieces	11-50	10 pieces
		51-100	20 pieces
101-1 000	10%	> 100	20%
> 1 000	100 pieces		

When a thorough examination of a lifejacket wrapped in a plastic bag is required, a ship inspector will request the crew to open the plastic bag and take out the lifejacket for examination.

Sub-committee on Survey Work of Local Vessels⁷

9. The Sub-committee on Survey Work of Local Vessels discussed the above proposed miscellaneous amendments at its meeting on 22 October 2015. In response to members' views that MD should clarify the requirements on transparent plastic bags and the method of examination, the supplementary information has already been provided in paragraphs 7 and 8 above. Apart from that, members agreed to the proposed miscellaneous amendments.

⁷ http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/aboutus/lvac_subcom_survey.html

Way Forward

10. Subject to members' views, MD will follow up the miscellaneous amendments as proposed above.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to comment on the above proposed miscellaneous amendments.

Local Vessels Safety Branch
Shipping Division
Marine Department
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