



MSC 103 BRIEF

The IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) held its 103rd session virtually from May 5 to 14, 2021. This Brief provides an overview of the more significant issues progressed at this session. A full report of the meeting will be included in the next ABS International Regulatory News Update.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Water Level Detectors in Multiple-Hold Cargo Ships
- Regulatory Scoping Exercise for MASS
- Work plan for Fuel Quality and Safety
- Guidelines for Non-SOLAS Vessels in Polar Waters
- Work plan Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety

ABS RESOURCES

- ABS Global Marine Services ([link](#))
- Advisory on Autonomous Functionality ([link](#))
- IMO Polar Code Support Services ([link](#))
- ABS Regulatory News ([link](#))
- ABS Rules and Guides ([link](#))

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AMENDMENTS TO MANDATORY INSTRUMENTS

Amendments to SOLAS

The Committee adopted amendments to SOLAS Chapter II-1 which introduce new Regulation 25-1, which addresses water level detector requirements for multiple-hold cargo ships (other than bulk carriers and tankers). The new regulation will require such vessels to be fitted with water level detectors in each cargo hold intended for dry cargoes, regardless of length. The regulation calls for water level detectors to alarm at water levels of not less than 0.3m above the bottom of the cargo hold and at water levels of 15% of the depth of the cargo hold (but not more than 2m). As an alternative, to the water level detector at a height of not less than 0.3m a bilge level sensor serving the bilge pumping arrangement required by Regulation II-1/35-1 and installed in the cargo hold bilge wells or other suitable location is considered acceptable, subject to 1. the fitting of the bilge level sensor at a height of no less than 0.3 m in the aft end of the cargo hold and 2. the bilge level sensor giving an audible and visual alarm at the navigation bridge which is clearly distinctive from the alarm given by other water level detectors fitted in the cargo hold.

Additionally, the Committee adopted an amendment to Regulation III/33.2 of SOLAS to clarify that only davit-launched lifeboats will be subject to the requirement of demonstrating capability of launching and towing while the ship is making headway at speeds up to 5 knots in calm water. This clarification is intended to confirm that free-fall lifeboats will not be subject to this requirement.

These amendments to SOLAS are to enter-into-force on 01 January 2024, however the Committee agreed to invite the Contracting Governments to SOLAS to implement the amendments to SOLAS Regulation III/33.2 and paragraph 4.4.1.3.2 of the LSA Code prior to 1 January 2024.

Amendments to 2011 ESP Code

The Committee adopted amendments to 2011 ESP Code affecting inspections during renewal surveys of double-hull oil tankers. The amendments will change the scope of required thickness measurements during Renewal Survey No.1, to the taking of thickness measurements in suspect areas only. This will be reflected in Annex B / Part A / Annex 2 of the Code, in amendments to the table "Minimum requirements for thickness measurements at renewal surveys of double-hull oil tankers". This modification will enter into force on 1 January 2023.



Amendments to FSS Code

The Committee adopted amendments to Chapter 9 of the FSS Code for fixed fire detection and fire alarm systems, inserting a new paragraph 2.1.8 requiring that in cargo ships and on passenger ship cabin balconies, where an individually identifiable system is fitted, isolator modules need not be provided at each fire detector if the system is arranged in such a way that the number and location of individually identifiable fire detectors rendered ineffective due to a fault would not be larger than an equivalent section in a section identifiable system. This modification will enter into force on 1 January 2024.

Amendments to LSA Code

In conjunction to the above mentioned adopted amendment to SOLAS Chapter III/Regulation 33, the Committee also adopted amendments to paragraph 4.4.1.3.2 of the LSA Code to clarify in the general testing requirements for lifeboats that free-fall lifeboats will not be subject to the requirement of demonstrating capability of launching while the ship is making headway at speeds up to 5 knots in calm water. This modification will enter into force on 1 January 2024.

Amendments to STCW Convention and Code

The Committee adopted amendments to the STCW Convention to include a definition for “High-voltage” in alternating current (AC) or direct current (DC) voltage in excess of 1000 volts. Additionally, the Committee adopted amendments to the STCW Code to include the capacity of “Electro-technical officer” as a recognized role under the definition of “Operational level” in section A-I/1. This modification will enter into force on 1 January 2023.

Amendments to SOLAS, MARPOL, the 1988 Load Line Protocol and the IBC and IGC Codes

Noting the decisions taken at MSC 101 regarding the review of the mandatory requirements in SOLAS, MARPOL, the 1988 Load Line Protocol and the IBC and IGC Codes regarding watertight doors on cargo ships to address inconsistencies and that the amendments be developed should apply to new ships, the actions taken by the Ship Design and Construction (SDC) Sub-Committee in the drafting of amendments, as well as the actions taken at MSC 102 approving the draft amendments to Chapter 2 of the IGC Code, the Committee decided to defer the approval of the draft amendments to these instruments until MSC 104 pending relevant submissions and discussions.

MARINE AUTONOMOUS SURFACE SHIPS (MASS)

Outcome of the Regulatory Scoping Exercise for the Use of MASS

The Committee considered the Regulatory Scoping Exercise (RSE) concerning Marine Autonomous Surface Ships after receiving the report from the MASS Working Group which progressed this work intersessionally. Beginning at MSC 98, the purpose of this work has been to acknowledge an increased deployment of various levels of automation in the maritime sector, and develop a clear and consistent regulatory framework to support the research and development which is ongoing. The current state of numerous IMO instruments has been assessed for their compatibility with all aspects of MASS, including remotely-controlled and autonomous navigation, vessel monitoring and collision avoidance systems.

Having reviewed the report of the MASS Working Group the Committee approved the outcome of the RSE and agreed to issue the outcome of the Regulatory Scoping Exercise for the use of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS) as an MSC Circular so as to ensure a wide distribution to the industry.



FUEL QUALITY AND SAFETY

Plan for Further Work

The Committee agreed to an updated action plan which called for an extended target completion to 2023 for the output "Development of further measures to enhance the safety of ships relating to the use of fuel oil". A correspondence group (CG) will be re-established with a view towards drafting amendments on; reporting of confirmed cases where oil fuel suppliers have failed to meet the flashpoint requirements taking into account that feedback should also be provided to the supplier, actions against oil fuel suppliers that have been found to deliver oil fuel that does not comply with minimum flashpoint requirements, and, the documentation of the flashpoint of the actual fuel batch when bunkering. The CG will also further develop the guidelines for ships to address situations where indicative test results suggest that the oil fuel supplied may not comply with SOLAS regulation II-2/4.2.1, and to collect information on and consider possible measures related to oil fuel parameters other than flashpoint. The CG was requested to submit a written report to MSC 105.

SHIP DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Noting the lack of regulatory framework to make the IMO Polar Code mandatory for non-SOLAS vessels, the Committee has approved recommendatory guidelines to address two types of non-SOLAS vessels which may regularly operate in polar waters.

Guidelines for Fishing Vessels of 24m in Length and Over Operating in Polar Waters

This addresses fishing vessels of 24 meters in length and over. The provision onboard of a supplementary operating manual for operations in polar waters is recommended, which should include information on vessel capabilities, equipment functionality and maintenance in low temperatures, and incident response procedures.

Guidelines for Pleasure Yachts of 300 GT and Above Not Engaged in Trade Operating in Polar Waters

Similar to the above, the Committee also approved recommendatory guidelines for pleasure yachts of 300 GT and above operating in polar waters and not engaged in trade.

Both these guidelines are not intended to infringe on national requirements for polar operations, but do provide guidance on assessing operational hazards and equipment for fishing vessels and yachts for their adequacy in the polar environment.

SHIP SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Guidelines for Maintenance/Inspections of Fixed Carbon Dioxide Fire-Extinguishing Systems

The Committee approved amendments to the *Guidelines for the Maintenance and Inspection of Fixed Carbon Dioxide Fire-Extinguishing Systems* (MSC.1/Circ.1318), in order to address concerns that there is a lack of clarity in the standard regarding the frequency of hydrostatic testing required for storage cylinders. The amended standard will require that at the 10-year inspection of the system, at least 10% of the total number of cylinders will be tested, and before the 20-year anniversary and every 10-year anniversary thereafter, all remaining bottles should be subject to a hydrostatic test. It is also clarified that when cylinders are removed for testing, they should be replaced such that the quantity of fire-extinguishing medium continues to satisfy the requirements of Chapter 5 of the FSS Code. Additionally, at least once every 5 years, internal inspection of all control valves should be performed.



MEASURES TO IMPROVE DOMESTIC FERRY SAFETY

Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety

The IMO Secretariat, in cooperation with interested parties, submitted a draft of the “Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety”. The Model Regulations have been informed by several expert group meetings, and have been developed in support of Member States concerned with improving the safety of ferry services within their area of authority. They provide a framework of provisions on domestic ferry safety for incorporation into national law or to serve as a basis for intergovernmental agreements.

Member States and interested parties have been invited to submit input to the next session of the Committee using the drafted Model Regulations as a base. These Model Regulations will be subjected to further review by a working group during MSC 104 and possibly a correspondence group thereafter. An updated work plan will also be submitted to MSC 104 for consideration.

NAVIGATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND SEARCH AND RESCUE

Amendments to the IAMSAR Manual

The Committee approved amendments to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual for inclusion in the 2022 edition, which were prepared by the ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group on Harmonization of Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue. Many of the amendments to the IAMSAR Manual are in support of the modernization of the GMDSS, recognizing mobile satellite service providers other than Inmarsat, and the amendments will become applicable 12 months after their adoption.

MATTERS RELATED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 Training and Certification Matters

After discussions within the Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW), the Committee approved the establishment of a correspondence group to develop harmonized guidance addressing the challenges seafarers have faced with regard to required training and certification under the STCW Convention.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Member States have independently developed a wide range of policies regarding the issuance, renewal, or extension of validity of seafarers’ certificate/documents, and various policies on the required continuous training needed to maintain certification. The pandemic has given need for flexibility by States in extending the validity of seafarers’ certifications, and recognition of the fact that the availability of refresher training for maintaining professional competencies has seen new obstacles. The Correspondence Group has been tasked to facilitate the harmonization of national interim measures related to these issues, and to develop guidance to be applied by STCW Parties. Due to a need for prompt action on this matter, the report of this Correspondence Group will be submitted directly to MSC 104 (October 2021).



PROPOSALS FOR NEW OUTPUTS

The following items were considered for the current biennial and post-biennial agenda as well as other ongoing work of subcommittees.

Items for the biennial agenda

Revision of MODU Code provisions to prohibit use of materials and products containing asbestos:

To consider proposing amendments to the 1979, 1989 and 2009 MODU Codes to align them with the provisions of SOLAS regulation II-1/3-5 to prohibit the use of materials containing asbestos in the structure of mobile offshore drilling units and develop respective interpretations. The target completion year of this output is 2023.

Fire protection on containerships:

To consider the development of amendments to SOLAS chapter II-2 and the FSS Code concerning detection and control of fires in cargo holds and on the cargo deck of containerships. The target completion year of this output is 2025.

Extension of the requirements for emergency towing arrangements in SOLAS regulation II-1/3-4 to all types of ships:

To consider an extension of the requirements for emergency towing arrangements in SOLAS regulation II-1/3-4, applicable to tankers of not less than 20,000 tonnes deadweight, to all types of large new ships. The target completion year of this output is 2023.

Training manual for new entrant PSC personnel:

To consider the development of a training manual for new entrant PSC personnel. The target completion year of this output is 2023.

Development of IMSAS guidance to assist in the implementation of the III Code by Member States:

Subject to concurrent decisions by the MEPC, consider the development of guidance in relation to the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) to assist in the implementation of the III Code by Member States. The target completion year of this output is 2023.

Items for the post-biennial agenda, after 2023

Review of the IGC Code:

To conduct a review of the International Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Liquefied Gases in Bulk (IGC Code) to clarify requirements, taking into account experience gained in their implementation.

Amendments to SOLAS chapters IV and V and development of relevant IMO instruments related to VHF Data Exchange System (VDES):

To consider amendments to SOLAS chapters IV and V to introduce VHF Data Exchange System (VDES), develop related performance standards and guidelines, and revise/amend relevant IMO instruments.

Development of performance standards for a digital navigational data system (NAVDAT) for the reception of maritime safety and security-related information:

To consider development of performance standards for a digital navigational data system (NAVDAT) for the reception of maritime safety and security-related information, develop a NAVDAT manual, amend MSI manuals to support the introduction of NAVDAT and the relationship with the existing MSI services, and update the GMDSS Master Plan in GISIS to reflect NAVDAT stations.



Review of the International Code for Application of Fire Test Procedures, 2010:

To consider the revision of the 2010 FTP Code in order to allow for new fire protection systems and materials, taking into account unified interpretations of the Code and most recent ISO fire test standards.

Review of guidance on the application of SOLAS provisions related to safe return to port:

To consider the revision of the interim explanatory notes for the assessment of passenger ship systems' capabilities after a fire or flooding casualty.

Containers lost at sea:

To consider the development of measures to facilitate the detection, reporting, positioning, tracking and recovery of containers lost at sea.

Other

Consider amendments to the International Code on the Enhanced Programme of Inspections during Surveys of Bulk Carriers and Oil Tankers, 2011 (2011 ESP Code):

The Committee instructed the SDC Sub -Committee to consider under its “any other business” agenda a proposal, along with other comments made, to amend the 2011 ESP Code to align the requirements for inspections of void spaces bounding cargo holds with the existing requirements for inspections of WBTs, which was identified during the flag State's marine safety investigation of the loss of MV Stellar Daisy.

POSTPONEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS

Decisions of the Committee

Due to closure of the IMO Building and limitations of the virtual meeting format utilized at this session, the Committee agreed to postpone consideration of the following agenda items. Related submissions will be referred to MSC 104.

1. Goal-Based New Ship Construction Standards.
2. Formal Safety Assessment.
3. Any Other Business – a number of non-COVID related items from MSC 102 and 103.

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