



Office of
Deputy Commissioner
of Maritime Affairs

THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
LIBERIA MARITIME AUTHORITY

Marine Notice

SAF-004
Rev. 11/24

TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF MERCHANT SHIPS, AGENTS AND RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS

SUBJECT: Lifeboat and Emergency Drills

Reference: (a) Liberian Maritime Regulations 10.296 (6)
(b) SOLAS'74, Regulations III/19 and III/25
(c) MODU Codes 1989, and 2009 as applicable
(d) [MSC.1/Circ.1486](#)
(e) [MSC.1/Circ.1486 Corr. 1](#)
(f) [Resolution MSC.402\(96\)](#)
(g) [MSC.1/Circ.1578](#)
(h) [Resolution A.1079\(28\)](#)

Supersedes: Marine Notice SAF-004, dated 10/24

The following changes have been included:

- a. Deleted paragraph 4.2 regarding each crew member participating in a free-fall launch within six months of assignment to the vessel. Renumbered section 4.0 paragraphs**

PURPOSE: This Notice provides guidelines for the safe conduct of drills using lifeboats on board ships and alternative method for lifeboat drills on mobile offshore drilling units (MODUs). Lifeboat drills provide an opportunity to verify that the emergency life-saving system and associated equipment is in place, in good working order, and ready for use. Such drills are also necessary to train and evaluate the crew in the use of the equipment and demonstrate that they have the capability and readiness to manage an emergency where lifeboats will be employed.

BACKGROUND: At the eight-first session of the Maritime Safety Committee in May 2006, the Committee approved guidelines for periodic servicing and maintenance of lifeboats, launching appliances and on-load release gear, and guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats. These guidelines consolidated numerous earlier circulars on measures to prevent accidents where crewmen were injured, sometimes fatally, while participating in lifeboat drills and/or inspections. At the eight-seventh session of the Maritime Safety Committee in May 2009, the Committee approved amendments to the guidelines, as set out in [MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1](#).

At its ninety-eighth session in June 2017, the Maritime Safety Committee approved the Guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats in [reference \(g\)](#). This included the amalgamation of Annex 1 to the Measures To Prevent Accidents With Lifeboats ([MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1](#)), and the

Interim Recommendation On Conditions For Authorization Of Service Providers For Lifeboats, Launching Appliances And On-Load Release Gear (MSC.1/Circ.1277) in The Requirements For Maintenance, Thorough Examination, Operational Testing, Overhaul And Repair Of Lifeboats And Rescue Boats, Launching Appliances And Release Gear, [reference \(f\)](#), which revoked annex 1 to MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1. MSC.1/Circ.1578 supersedes annex 2 to MSC.1/Circ.1206/Rev.1.

At the ninety-fourth session of the Maritime Safety Committee in November 2014, recognizing that the requirements for launching, maneuvering and retrieval of lifeboats during abandon ship drills on MODUs being very similar to the SOLAS requirements for conventional ships may lead to potentially hazardous situations during remote offshore operations, the Committee adopted amendments to the 2009 MODU Code providing an alternate method for lifeboat drills on MODUs for which guidelines are provided in [references \(d\) and \(e\)](#).

APPLICABILITY: This Notice applies to Owners, Masters, Ships Officers, Nautical Inspectors, and Recognized Organization Surveyors when performing drills on board Liberian flag ships and MODUs. This Notice also addresses several SOLAS requirements established by the Office of the Deputy Commissioner.

REQUIREMENTS:

1.0 Drills

Each member of the crew on board a ship shall participate in at least one abandon ship, and one fire and emergency drill each month. Passenger ships must perform at least one abandon ship and one fire and emergency drill each week (see SOLAS III/30), however, the entire crew need not be involved in every drill. In addition, each lifeboat shall be lowered to, and maneuvered in the water at least once every three months during an abandon ship drill and:

- Davit launched lifeboats: shall be launched at least once every three months, and
- Lifeboats arranged for free-fall launching: the lifeboat shall either be launched by free-fall with only the operating crew on board or simulated free fall at least every six months (see the guidance for simulated free fall launching provided in the appendix to [reference \(g\)](#)).

If a ship is fitted with marine evacuation systems, drills shall include exercising of the procedures required for the deployment of such a system up to the point immediately preceding actual deployment of the system. This aspect of drills should be augmented by regular instruction using the on-board training aids required by regulation III/35.4.

Additionally, every system party member shall, as far as practicable, be further trained by participation in a full deployment of a similar system into water, either on board a ship or ashore, at intervals of no longer than two years, but in no case longer than three years. This training can be associated with the deployments required by SOLAS III/20.8.2.

2.0 Principles

In order to minimize risk of injury and loss of life, while conducting drills and while performing tests and maintenance on board lifeboats, the following principles identified in [reference \(g\)](#) should be followed.

- 2.1 The lifeboats, and the lifeboat launching equipment shall be thoroughly checked by trained crewmen before the drill to ensure all systems will operate properly.
- 2.2 Crewmembers should be thoroughly trained in and familiar with the functioning, operation and maintenance requirements of the specific type of launching arrangements installed on board.
- 2.3 Emphasis shall be on safety and learning. Lessons learned in the course of a drill should be documented and made a part of follow-up shipboard training discussions and planning the next drill session.
- 2.4 The lowering of a boat with its full complement of persons is an example of an element of a drill that may, depending on the circumstances, involve an unnecessary risk. Such drills should only be carried out if special precautions are observed.
- 2.5 The master of every Liberian vessel other than a passenger ship shall exercise the crew in at least one fire and abandon ship drill only every month; and shall conduct weekly safety training sessions as provided in the vessel training plan over any six-month period, which should include training in one or more of the following subjects:

Safety Management System	Portable Fire Extinguishers	Fire main/fire fighting	Fixed Fire Extinguishing Systems
Self Contained Breathing Apparatus	Thermal Protective Aids, Ring Buoys, Life Jackets, and Exposure Suits	Launching Lifeboats and liferafts	Lifeboat/liferaft Emergency Equipment
EPIRBs & other Emergency Communication Equipment	Flares and other Emergency Signals	First Aid (including CPR)	Line Throwing Apparatus
Entering Enclosed Spaces	Pollution Response	Man Overboard Response	Response to spills of Hazardous Materials on board
Vessel Collision or Grounding Response	Loss of Steering	Loss of Propulsion	How to fight fires on board this vessel.
Search and Rescue assistance	Ballast Water Exchange	Waste/Garbage Management	Oily Bilge Water Management
Ship board security drill once a quarter	Checking for and processing stowaways	Enclosed Space entry drill every 2 Months	

The drills of the crew shall take place within 24 hours of the ship leaving a port if more than 25% of the crew have not participated in abandon ship and fire drills on board that particular ship in the previous month. When a ship enters service for the first time, after modification of a major character or when a new crew is engaged, these drills shall be held before sailing. The Administration may accept other arrangements that are at least equivalent for those classes of ships for which this is impracticable.

On a ship engaged on a voyage where passengers are scheduled to be on board for more than 24 hours, musters of newly-embarked passengers shall take place prior to or immediately upon departure. Passengers shall be instructed in the use of the lifejackets and the action to take in an emergency. The Master of every Liberian passenger vessel shall cause the crew to be exercised at fire and boat drill at least once every week and such drills shall be conducted as if an actual emergency existed. All fire pumps shall be started and sufficient outlets opened in order to determine that the system is in proper working order.

3.0 Davit Launched Lifeboats Drills

- 3.1 During drills crewmembers should not be on board a lifeboat when the boat is first lowered from the stowed position.
- 3.2 The launch shall be carried out under the supervision of a responsible person who should be an officer experienced in such procedures.
- 3.3 The responsible person shall establish and maintain good communication with the assigned operating crew.
- 3.4 Open Lifeboats should first be lowered to approximately 2 meters above the water without crewmembers on board, and then hoisted to a position where the assigned operating crew can safely board the lifeboat. The lifeboat is then to be lowered to the water with the operating crew on board who shall grasp the man ropes during the descent. The responsible person shall inform the other members of the lifeboat operating crew to find secure seating as the boat is about to be lowered. Once the operating crew are in secure positions and the boat is waterborne, the responsible person may release the falls. Additional crew, if needed, may then embark via the embarkation ladder.
- 3.5 When possible, enclosed and partially enclosed lifeboats should be lowered to approximately 2-3 meters above the water without crewmembers on board. The lifeboat should then be raised to a suitable level for the operating crew to embark via the embarkation ladder or from the embarkation deck, whichever provides the safest access. Once all are seated and secured, the responsible person may again direct the boat to be lowered to the water. Once waterborne, the responsible person will inform the other members of the lifeboat operating crew to stay seated as the boat is about to be lowered. Once the operating crew are in secure positions and the boat is waterborne, the responsible person may release the falls from inside the lifeboat. Additional crew, if needed, may then embark via the embarkation ladder.
- 3.6 Once waterborne, the painter shall be released when it is safe to do so, and if fitted with an engine, the engine shall be operated ahead and astern.
- 3.7 The lifeboat shall then be brought alongside for recovery by the operating crew. Under the direction of the responsible person the lifeboat shall be ready to be hoisted.
- 3.8 The responsible person shall ensure the lifeboat is fully and correctly engaged with the recovery system and all unnecessary crew have disembarked the lifeboat using the embarkation ladder before the lifeboat is raised.

- 3.9 The responsible person shall make sure the lifeboat is properly raised and stowed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Note: The operating crew is defined as the minimum number of persons (three to four) needed to release the boat once lowered into the water, operate the boat and engine and assist with the recovery of the boat once launched.

4.0 Free-Fall Lifeboats Drills

- 4.1 Free-fall lifeboats should be exercised for drills similar to closed lifeboats. They are required to be operated in the water at intervals not exceeding three months and are to be launched by either the free-fall method or simulated free fall at least every six months (see the guidance for simulated free fall launching provided in the appendix to [reference \(g\)](#), unless a dispensation has been granted by the Administration to conduct a launch only once every 12 months (see section 7 below).
- 4.2 There shall be an area astern of the ship, which is free of any obstructions or objects the freefall lifeboats projected path for a distance of at least one and one half times the distance the freefall lifeboat is expected to travel before it comes to a standstill after being launched.
- 4.3 When performing a free-fall launch drill the boat should first be lowered to the water, engine tested etc., then raised and restowed. The boat shall then be launched by the free-fall method.
- 4.4 Prior to a free-fall launching the rescue boat should be launched and ready to act as a standby boat to assist the free-fall lifeboat and in re-securing.

5.0 Guidelines for simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats ([appendix to reference \(g\)](#))

The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide a basic outline of essential steps to safely carry out simulated launching. These Guidelines are general; the lifeboat manufacturer's instruction manual should always be consulted before conducting simulated launching. Simulated launching should only be carried out with lifeboats and launching appliances designed to accommodate it, and for which the manufacturer has provided instructions. All persons involved should be familiar with the manufacturers' instructions and the activation of the release mechanism. Manuals, posters and signs may be used to assist familiarization and the conduct of drills. Simulated launching should be carried out under the supervision of a responsible person who should be an officer experienced in such procedures and be conducted without the physical activation of the free-fall release system. Testing of release systems should be separate to and not carried out during simulated launching drills.

- 5.1 Check equipment and documentation to ensure that all components of the lifeboat and launching appliance are in good operational condition.
- 5.2 Ensure that all personnel involved in the drill are familiar with the operating manuals, posters and signs.
- 5.3 Ensure that the restraining device(s) provided by the manufacturer for simulated launching are installed and secure and that the free-fall release mechanism is fully and correctly engaged.

- 5.4 Establish and maintain good communication between the assigned operating crew and the responsible person.
- 5.5 Disengage lashings, gripes, etc., installed to secure the lifeboat for sea or for maintenance, except those required for simulated free-fall.
- 5.6 Participating crew are then to board the lifeboat and fasten their seatbelts under the supervision of the responsible person.
- 5.7 All crew disembark the lifeboat.
- 5.8 Return the lifeboat to the condition it was in prior to step provided in paragraph 3.4. Ensure that the lifeboat is returned to its normal stowed condition. Remove any restraining and/or recovery devices used only for the simulated launch procedure.

6.0 Alternative methods for lifeboat drills, [references \(d\) and \(e\)](#), on MODUs

The following guidelines are intended to assist the operator of a MODU in a situation where the execution of the three-monthly launch and manoeuvre of lifeboats as specified in paragraph 14.13.4.2 of the 2009 MODU Code is not possible. This is on condition that there is no reduction in ability to demonstrate assurance and capability of readiness to safely evacuate the unit's personnel by way of lifeboats. The provisions below for alternative methods shall be included in the unit's operating procedures.

The alternative methods for lifeboat drills may also be applied to the relevant sections of the 1979 MODU Code adopted by [Resolution A.414\(XI\)](#) and to the 1989 MODU Code adopted by [Resolution A.649\(16\)](#). The alternative methods for lifeboat drills may also be applied to stationary and/or substantially moored mobile offshore unit (MOUs) that are not MODUs.

6.1 Equipment:

- .1 A comprehensive maintenance and inspection plan meeting the criteria found in [references \(d\) and \(e\)](#) should be in place. This plan should be to the satisfaction of the Administration.
- .2 Weekly and monthly inspections should be conducted in accordance with sections 10.18.7 and 10.18.8 of the 2009 MODU Code.
- .3 In addition, on a monthly basis, each lifeboat should be lowered to just above but not entering the water, and returned to the original stowage position; the condition of the hull, hook release and retrieval systems (lubrication, integrity and storage) and the operational condition of davit systems should be checked.
- .4 Insofar as possible, those on board responsible for lifeboat-launching should be involved in the annual servicing and function test of release gear carried out in accordance with section 6 of the annex to [reference \(f\)](#).

6.2 Personnel:

- .1 A competence assurance program should be in place and cover all aspects of instruction and exercising of the crew as pertains to lifeboats and should be in accordance with the recommendations for the training and certification of personnel on mobile offshore units (MOUs), [reference \(h\)](#).
- .2 In addition to the specified mandatory training (e.g. as shown in table A-VI/2-1 of the STCW Code), the lifeboat coxswain should receive intermediate training (at least once every 2.5 years) at a facility satisfactory to the Administration. This training should include practical demonstration of all the following elements which are part of the three-monthly launch/manoeuvre exercise:
 - .1 prepare and make ready the lifeboat;
 - .2 deploy and lower the boat into the water;
 - .3 release the boat;
 - .4 propel and steer the boat; and
 - .5 functioning of the lifeboat onboard systems such as deluge, air, etc.

This training should be carried out utilizing a lifeboat system the same as, or substantially similar to, the equipment fitted on board the unit;

- .3 Drills and exercises should be in accordance with appendix 1 of Resolution MSC 1079/28.
- .4 Simulators can form a useful and important part of an overall competence assurance programme. Where such simulators are to be used they should be wholly appropriate to the lifeboat system encountered on board the unit. Simulators should not be seen as a complete replacement for practical, hands-on, training and drills.
- .5 Records of training in proficiency in lifeboats, including that carried out at a facility satisfactory to the Administration, should be readily accessible for inspection.

7.0 Requesting a dispensation from launching a lifeboat

In accordance with regulation III/19.3.4.5 of SOLAS, the operators of ships fitted with lifeboats may request the flag Administration to issue a dispensation permitting ships operating on short international voyages not to launch the lifeboats on one side if their berthing arrangements in port and their trading patterns do not permit launching of lifeboats on that side. However, all such lifeboats shall be lowered at least once every three months and launched at least annually.

To receive the dispensation the vessel operator must contact the Office of the Deputy Commissioner at the Liberian International Ship and Corporate Registry. The request may be sent by email to the following address: RegsandStandards@lisr.com.

Note: the request must identify the vessel by name, IMO Number, and clearly describe the ships trading pattern or the environmental conditions that are the reason the dispensation should be granted.

8.0 General Safety Precautions Concerning Lifeboats:

- 8.1 It is of the utmost importance that the officers and crewmembers are familiar with and confident that they will be able to safely use the lifesaving appliances.
- 8.2 When servicing davits in the stowed position, the Harbor Safety Pins or other similar safety devices must be in place to ensure the davits cannot be accidentally moved.
- 8.3 When personnel are in stowed lifeboats, hanging-off pendants; or maintenance pins provided by the manufacturer for free-fall lifeboats should be used to prevent the boat from being accidentally released and dropped from the releasing gear.
- 8.4 All launching appliances should receive regular maintenance by persons who are familiar with and able to follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- 8.5 Checklists should be developed and used to ensure that all safety precautions are in place before personnel perform maintenance or inspections.
- 8.6 Checklists should be developed and used to ensure that standard safety precautions and operating procedures are followed including proper stowing/securing after use.
- 8.7 No additional securing arrangements should be used which are not included in the lowering/free-fall instructions.

These standard procedures should be included in each vessel's safety management system as applicable.

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