



TECHNICAL CIRCULAR

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TO SHIP OWNER/SHIP MANAGER/INTERESTED PARTIES

Key Points of the IMO MSC 104 Outcome

The IMO's Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) 104th session was held remotely from 04 to 08 October 2021 considering a wide variety of issues that bother the shipping industry.

Meeting highlights

- Adoption of amendments to harmonize the requirements for watertight doors on cargo ships across several IMO instruments
- Recognition of the Japanese Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (QZSS)
- Approval of draft SOLAS amendments to modernize the requirements for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System
- Approval of a draft Assembly resolution on comprehensive action to address seafarers' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic
- the development of guidance for remote surveys and audits

Adoption of Amendments to Mandatory Instruments Watertight Doors on Cargo Ships

MSC 104 adopted amendments to the 1988 Load Lines Protocol and the IGC Code to harmonize the consideration of watertight doors in damage stability calculations with those in SOLAS. The amendments will not have any impact on existing ships. Similar harmonization amendments to MARPOL Annex I and the IBC Code are subject to approval by MEPC 77 (November 2021). The amendments will enter into force on 1 January 2024.

Minor correction to the 1988 Load Lines Protocol

MSC 104 adopted an amendment to Regulation 22 to correct an erroneous reference to "inlets" in a table showing acceptable arrangements for scuppers and discharges. The amendment will enter into force on 1 January 2024.

Ad hoc mid-term amendment cycle

Since 1 January 2020, amendments to SOLAS and related mandatory instruments have followed a four-year cycle of entry into force. All amendments for the 2024 update must be adopted before 1 July 2022.

MSC 104 recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused delays in some ongoing work and agreed to introduce an ad hoc mid-term amendments cycle with an entry-into-force date of 1 January 2026 for amendments adopted before 1 July 2024.

Navigation, Communications, Search and Rescue

The Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (QZSS)

All ships shall carry a receiver for a global navigation satellite system (GNSS) or a terrestrial radio navigation system. This requirement relies on the recognition of systems provided and operated by governments or organizations, for example GPS (USA), Galileo (EU), GLONASS (Russia), BeiDou (China) and IRNSS (India). MSC 104 approved a safety of navigation (SN) circular recognizing the Japanese Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (QZSS) as a component of the World-Wide Radio Navigation System (WWRNS). Performance standards for receivers for the QZSS were approved by MSC 102.

Modernization of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System

The Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), adopted in 1988, has been subject to review and modernization with the aim to adapt to modern communication systems and remove carriage requirements for obsolete systems. MSC 104 approved draft SOLAS amendments to modernize the GMDSS requirements, as well as consequential draft amendments to the High-Speed Craft (HSC), Special Purpose Ships (SPS) and Mobile Offshore Drilling Units (MODU) Codes. The modernization implies inter alia more generic requirements, independent of specific service providers, and amended equipment requirements for sea areas A1 to A4. The provisions for communication equipment have been moved from SOLAS Chapter III on life-saving appliances to Chapter IV on radio communications, and references to outdated resolutions and circulars will be replaced. The draft amendments are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2024, subject to adoption by MSC 105 (April 2022).

Performance standards for Voyage Data Recorders (VDR)

MSC 104 approved consequential amendments to the performance standards for simplified VDRs and VDRs, following the adoption of the performance standards for float-free emergency position-indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz (Resolution MSC.471(101)) in 2019

Iridium Safety Cast service manual

MSC 104 approved a revision of the Iridium Safety Cast service manual (MSC.1/Circ.1613). The revised manual will become effective on 1 January 2022.

Measure to Improve Domestic Ferry Safety

The global number of accidents and casualties related to domestic ferries has remained high for decades. While domestic operations are outside the scope of the IMO's responsibilities, MSC 104 approved non-mandatory model regulations on domestic ferry safety. A draft MSC resolution on the adoption of the model regulations will be considered by MSC 105 (April 2022).

IMO agreed to a plan of work which includes:

- Collection and analysis of best practices
- Development of model regulations on domestic ferry safety
- Incorporation of the model regulations in domestic law
- Development of online training material on domestic ferry safety

Goal-Based New Ship Construction Standards (GBS)

Goal-based new ship construction standards (GBS) for bulk carriers and oil tankers are conceptually IMO's rules for class rules. Under the GBS standards, IMO auditors use guidelines to verify construction rules for bulk carriers and oil tankers of class societies acting as Recognized Organizations. GBS verification audits MSC 104 agreed that the ship construction rules for bulk carriers and oil tankers of IACS members continue to conform to the GBS standards.

Decisions of Other IMO Bodies

Updated HSSC Survey Guidelines

MSC 104 approved the draft Survey Guidelines under the Harmonized System of Survey Certification (HSSC), 2021, to revoke resolution A.1140(31). The revised guidelines include provisions related to:

- Operational readiness, maintenance and inspections for lifeboats and rescue boats, launching appliances and release gear
- Means of escape for passenger ships and helicopter facilities
- System commission testing of ballast water management systems
- Harmonization of survey periods of cargo ships not subject to the ESP Code
- Check of two-way VHF using expired primary batteries
- Electronic record books under MARPOL
- Helicopter facility foam firefighting appliances

The updated Survey Guidelines will be submitted to MEPC 77 (November 2021) for concurrent approval and to Assembly 32 (December 2021) for adoption.

Measures to Enhance Maritime Security

Cyber guidelines for ports and port facilities

MSC 104 agreed to reference the first edition of the industry developed “IAPH cybersecurity guidelines for ports and port facilities”, in the next version of the guidelines on maritime cyber risk management (MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev.1), subject to concurrent agreement by the FAL committee.

Implementation of IMO Instruments

Port state control (PSC) procedures

Draft Assembly resolution on Procedures for port State Control, 2021. Once adopted, the procedures for port State control, 2021 will enter into force 1 January 2022 and will revoke resolution A.1138(31).

Harmonized System of Survey and Certification (HSSC), 2021.

Draft Assembly resolution on the survey guidelines under the Harmonized System of Survey and Certification (HSSC), 2021. Once adopted, the survey guidelines under the Harmonized System of Survey and Certification (HSSC), 2021, will enter into force 1 January 2022 and will revoke resolution A.1140(31).

IMO Instruments Implementation Code

Draft Assembly resolution on 2021 non-exhaustive list of obligations under instruments relevant to the IMO Instruments Implementation Code. Once adopted, the 2021 non-exhaustive list of obligations under instruments relevant to the IMO Instruments Implementation Code, will enter into force 1 January 2022 and will revoke resolution A.1141(31). MSC 104 also considered reports of an anomaly between the mandatory audit requirements contained in the STCW Convention and the requirements of the IMO member State audit scheme (IMSAS) audit and agreed that III 8 should discuss this further.

RO model agreement

MSC-MEPC.5 circular on the Model agreement for the authorization of recognized organizations acting on behalf of the Administration. MSC 104 noted that paragraph 6.5.5 of the draft MSC-MEPC.5 circular has been aligned with paragraph 5.3.2.4 of part 3 of the RO Code with respect to the scope of the “statutory certification and services” as defined in the RO Code.

Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping

COVID-19 training and certification matters

The COVID-19 pandemic has created problems regarding the renewal of documents, such as certificates of proficiency and health certificates, and many seafarers are having difficulties maintaining their certificates because the necessary courses are not available. MSC 104 approved a draft “Guidance on Seafarers’ training and certification for issuing Administrations, flag States and port States during the COVID-19 pandemic”, containing the common measures adopted by administrations during the pandemic. MSC 104 further agreed to develop a new module in the IMO’s online information database GISIS to make information about the various measures available to all stakeholders.

Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships

Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS)

MSC 104 agreed to develop a new goal-based instrument for maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS). It was also agreed that the ultimate goal would be the preparation of a mandatory instrument to address MASS operations in the IMO regulatory framework. The work will be initiated by the development of a roadmap at MSC 105 (April 2022).

Sub-committee on Implementation of IMO Instruments (III) Remote surveys, ISM Code audit and ISPS Code verifications MSC 104 agreed to develop guidance on assessments and applications of remote survey, ISM Code audit and ISPS Code verification.

Any Other Business and COVID-19 Related Matters

MSC 102 and MSC 103 addressed the issues of facilitating crew changes and travel and the need to prioritise the vaccination of seafarers. MSC 104 approved the ‘Draft Assembly resolution on Comprehensive action required to address seafarers’ challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic’. The draft resolution urges Member States to designate seafarers as ‘key workers’ in order to facilitate shore leave and their travel across borders, prioritise vaccination and provide access to medical care. The draft resolution will go to Assembly 32 in November 2021 for adoption. MSC 104 also noted the update on the work of the Seafarer Crisis Action Team (SCAT).

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