OUTCOME OF IMO’S MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE, MSC 101 – AUTOMATION AND FUEL OIL SAFETY

June 2019

The 101st session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) was held in London from 5 to 14 June 2019. This statutory news summarizes the main topics discussed, such as maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS), fuel oil safety, and safety of ships operating in polar waters, as well as other key decisions.

Autonomous ships
Interim guidelines for trials of maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS) were finalized. As a basic principle, trials of autonomous ships that operate with little or no human intervention shall meet at least the same level of safety, security and environmental protection as required for conventional ships.

Fuel oil safety
Interim measures to enhance the safety of ships relating to the use of fuel oil were developed and approved. Member States are recommended to report to the IMO confirmed cases where the delivered fuel failed to meet the flashpoint requirement, or where delivered fuel jeopardized the safety of ships and personnel, and to consider actions to be taken. Member States are further recommended to encourage the widest possible application of the industry standard for marine distillate fuels (ISO 8217:2017). These interim measures are set out in the new resolution MSC.465(101). An action plan for the development of mandatory measures was agreed, targeting finalization in 2021.

Safety of ships operating in polar waters
Recommendations for both navigation and communication equipment and for life-saving appliances and arrangements on board ships operating in polar waters were approved. The interim guidelines outline recommendations to mitigate hazards related to operation in the fragile and inhospitable polar environments. The guidelines are set out in MSC.1/Circ. 1612 and MSC.1/Circ. 1614 respectively.

The design and capacity of survival craft intended for polar waters may be affected by the recommendations to ventilation and to carry additional clothing, survival equipment and water.

It was further agreed to encourage Members States to apply safety measures set out in the Polar Code also to non-SOLAS ships operating in polar waters.
Other key decisions at the MSC 101:

- **Alternative design of life-saving appliances**
  Revised guidelines on the alternative design of life-saving appliances were approved. The guidelines provide goals and functional requirements intended to define the intent of the prescriptive requirements in SOLAS Ch. III. The amended MSC.1/Circ. 1212/Rev. 1 is, for example, relevant for large lifeboats exceeding the maximum carrying capacity of a “standard” lifeboat.

- **Fire safety of new and existing Ro-Ro passenger ships**
  Interim guidelines for minimizing the incidence and consequences of fires on Ro-Ro spaces, and special category spaces of new and existing Ro-Ro passenger ships, were approved. Vessels having the additional DNV GL class notation F(A, M, C), 2018 or later editions, will be in line with this best practice.

- **Safe mooring**
  Amended SOLAS requirements on safe mooring were approved, together with the associated guidelines on design, inspection, maintenance and equipment. The requirements for inspection and maintenance of mooring equipment, including lines, are expected to be given retroactive application. The amended requirements are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2024, subject to adoption by MSC 102 in May 2020.

- **Watertight integrity**
  The design criteria for watertight integrity in SOLAS were amended to address inconsistencies with the probabilistic damage stability approach. The amendments address inter alia assumptions regarding progressive flooding, valves in the collision bulkhead and watertight doors. The amendments are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2024, subject to adoption by MSC 102 in May 2020.

- **E-navigation**
  The IMO e-navigation initiative seeks to increase safety at sea by ensuring compatibility between various sophisticated electronic navigational tools. As part of this strategy, the MSC 101 approved inter alia guidelines describing standard displays and controls and adopted corresponding amendments to the performance standards for presentation of information on navigational displays (MSC.191(79)). The amendments will enter into force on 1 January 2024.

- **Ships using natural gas as fuel**
  The MSC 101 adopted amendments to the IGF Code for ships using natural gas as fuel. The amendments concern inter alia safe fuel distribution outside machinery spaces and fire protection between spaces containing fuel containment systems. The amendments will enter into force on 1 January 2024.

**Recommendations**
Note that the amended SOLAS requirements on safe mooring may impact the arrangement of mooring equipment and the space required to operate it.

Note that any capacity adjustment of survival craft intended for polar waters would depend on the overall life-saving concept, considering, for example, the types of equipment, insulation and heating to maintain a habitable environment inside the survival craft.

**References**
[IMO website](https://www.imo.org)

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