



Ship Type: All Trade Area: Worldwide

Bulletin 520 - 04/07 - Lifeboat Safety - Worldwide

The Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) has updated two of its Information Bulletins relating to lifeboat safety, after investigation into a recent tragic lifeboat drill incident.

One of the bulletins lists seven categories attributed to lifeboat accidents as follows:

- Failure of on-load release gear (OLR)
- Inadvertent operation of on-load release mechanism
- Inadequate maintenance of lifeboats, davits and launching equipment
- Communication failure
- Lack of familiarity with lifeboats, davits, equipment and associated controls
- Unsafe practices during lifeboat drills and inspections
- Design faults other than on-load release.

The report of an investigation into a fatal accident on a Bahamas ship revealed that all of the above were factors. It recognised the diversity in OLR types on different vessels and recommended comprehensive crew training at the earliest opportunity after joining, even for persons who may not ordinarily be required to operate the on-load release gear.

Inadvertent operation, or incomplete engagement of the locking mechanism prior to hoisting, is of particular concern as a clear result of the dangers of crew unfamiliarity with on-load release gear. Consequently it is recommended that, where possible, a working model of the OLR is carried on board for training purposes. In one case where a working model was unavailable a generic training video was supplied which also covered the specific equipment on board that ship.

In addition to the above factors the effects of crew fatigue should be considered. Drills must be carefully planned to take into account the voyage requirements, loading and unloading operations, weather conditions etc. in order to identify the most suitable opportunity for an alert crew to carry out the drill.

The BMA has received applications for exemption from the requirement to carry out lifeboat launching during abandon ship drills. However, exemption for the maximum period allowable under SOLAS may result in the drill not being carried out at the next available opportunity.

Noting the value of drills for crew familiarization and training, exemptions from this requirement will not normally be granted. However, in noting the potential hazards associated with conducting drills in unsuitable conditions the BMA accepts that the Master may use his professional judgement to either:

- Modify the drill to suit the circumstances of weather, location and vessel operational requirements, or
- Postpone the drill until the earliest opportunity when circumstances are suitable for the drill to be carried out.

Full details of planned drills, whether carried out or not, must be entered into the Official Log Book with reasons for the modification or postponement (if applicable). Such written evidence is accepted by the BMA as valid reason for not carrying out abandon ship drills at the required intervals.

BMA Information Bulletins updated this month include No. B72 – Enhancing lifeboat safety during abandon ship drills, and No. B87 – Safety of lifeboat on-load release gear. The BMA suggests that both bulletins should be read and in conjunction with IMO Circulars MSC/Circ. 1207 and MSC/Circ. 1206. All BMA Information Bulletins are available for download from the BMA website.

Source of information: Bahamas Maritime Authority
www.bahamasmaritime.com