

Comment(s) with respect to this notice, if any, may kindly be furnished to

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Merchant Shipping Notice of 2019

Acceptance of 'life rafts' in lieu of lifeboats on certain types of vessels

1. Chapter III of International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 [SOLAS Convention] addresses matters pertaining to life-saving appliances and arrangements on merchant ships. In India, this is addressed by Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances) Rules 1991 and through orders/ notices/circulars issued by the Directorate General of Shipping, Govt. of India from time to time.

2. During review of the aforesaid rules/ orders/ notices/circulars ambiguity was observed in regard to acceptance of 'life rafts' in lieu of lifeboats on certain types of vessels. This limits/hinders uniform interpretation and implementation of the said rules/ orders/ notices/circulars as well as impairs maintenance of their parity with international instruments on the subject matter.

3. In order to promote shipping, ensure uniform interpretation and implementation of rules related thereto as well as to maintain such rules in sync with international instruments, the Directorate examined the rules/ orders/ notices/circulars on the subject matter and noted the following:

3.1. Passenger vessels

3.1.1 Rule 25 of Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances) Rules, 1991 (as amended) stipulates that every passenger ship shall carry lifeboats.

3.1.2 Section 6.4.3 of DGS Shipping Order 05 of 2017 requires fitment of lifeboats on all passenger vessels notified as River Sea Passenger Vessels, Type IV.

3.1.3 Sub para (1) of Rule 30 and sub para (2) of Rule 31 of MS (LSA) Rules, 1991 permit acceptance of life rafts in lieu of lifeboats on vessels of Classes I and II respectively, for vessels of less than 500 gross tonnage and which are certified to carry not more than 200 persons. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding its applicability of this provision on passenger vessels of class III, IV, V, VI, VII and RSPV Type IV vessels.

3.1.4 Considering the fact that the principles enunciated in SOLAS chapter III, Reg 21.1.4 are applicable to vessels on international voyages and therefore the same can also be extended to vessels on non-international voyages. Accordingly, in order to promote shipping and to ensure uniform interpretation and implementation of rules related thereto, every passenger ship of Class III, IV, V, VI and VII under MS (LSA) Rules, 1991 or every passenger ship notified as RSPV IV in DGS' Shipping Order 05 of 2017, which is less than 500 gross tonnage and certified to carry less than 200 persons may in lieu of being fitted with lifeboat(s), comply with the following as permissible under Reg. 21.1.4 of chapter III of SOLAS.

3.1.5 (i) Such vessels shall carry on each side of the ship inflatable or rigid liferafts complying with the requirements of Fourth Schedule of MS (LSA) Rules, 1991 of such aggregate capacity as will accommodate the total number of persons on board.

3.1.5 (ii) Unless the liferafts required by sub para 3.1.5 (i) above are stowed in a position providing for easy side-to-side transfer at a single open deck level, additional liferafts shall be provided so that the total capacity available on each side will accommodate 150% of the total number of persons on board.

3.1.5 (iii) If the rescue boat fitted on ship, if required, is also a partially or totally enclosed lifeboat complying with the requirements of Part II, III or IV of Third Schedule of MS (LSA) rules, 1991, it may be included in the aggregate capacity required by sub paragraph 3.1.5 (i),

provided that the total capacity available on either side of the ship is at least 150% of the total number of persons on board; and

3.1.5 (iv) In the event of any one survival craft being lost or rendered unserviceable, there shall be sufficient survival craft available for use on each side, including those which are stowed in a position providing for easy side-to-side transfer at a single open deck level, to accommodate the total number of persons on board.

3.1.5 (v) Sub paragraphs 3.1.5(i) to 3.1.5(iv) may be read in conjunction with Rule 32, 33, 34 or 35 of MS (Life Saving Appliances) Rules, 1991 (as amended) or Section 6.4.3 of DGS Shipping Order 05 of 2017, as applicable.

3.2 Cargo vessels

3.2.1 Rule 37(2) of MS (LSA) Rules 1991 (as amended) stipulates the carriage of life rafts on cargo ships classed VIII or IX which are less than 85 m in length. Lack of clarity has been expressed regarding whether such life rafts are acceptable in lieu of lifeboats on such vessels.

3.2.2 It is observed that SOLAS chapter III, Reg 31.1.3 permits acceptance of life rafts in lieu of lifeboats on cargo ships of less than 85 m in length other than oil tankers, chemical tankers and gas carriers. In view of the same, it is clarified that paragraph 1 of Rule 37(2) of MS(LSA) rules 1991 may be interpreted to read as *'Every such ship, if it is less than 85 meters in length, other than tankers, chemicals carrier and gas carriers, may in lieu of meeting the requirements of sub paragraph (2) of Rule 36 carry _____'*

4. This shall come into force from the date of issue of this M S Notice.

5. This issues with the approval of Competent Authority.