

Nautical Wing Circular No.NT/NAV/01/2006

NO: 39-NT(20)/2005

Dated:22nd March, 2006

Sub: Installation of voyage data recorders on Indian Ships.

1. Regulation 20 of Chapter V of SOLAS deals with voyage data recorders. As per the regulation, vessels engaged on International voyages shall be fitted with Voyage Data Recorder (VDR) as follows.
 - a. Passenger ships constructed on or after 1st July 2002;
 - b. Ro-Ro passenger ships constructed before 1st July 2002, not later than the first survey on or after 1st July 2002;
 - c. Passenger ships, other than ro-ro passenger ships, constructed before 1st July 2002, not later than 1st January 2004; and
 - d. Ships, other than passenger ships, of 3,000 gross tonnage and upwards constructed on or after 1st July 2002.

2. This regulation was silent about the applicability of installing VDR on existing ships. This regulation was subsequently amended by MSC 79 to include installation of VDR on existing cargo ships engaged on International voyages. However, instead of the VDR the vessels could be fitted with simplified voyage data recorder S-VDR.

3. VDR's are required to comply with the performance standards specified in Resolution A. 861(20). S-VDR's are required to comply with the performance standards specified in MSC 163 (78).

4. VDR and S-VDR may be of the fixed type or of the float-free type. If, they are of the float-free type, then the VDR & S-VDR should comply with the performance standards for Float-free Release and Activation Arrangements as specified in the relevant IMO Resolutions.

5. The purpose of a Voyage Data Recorder (VDR) and Simplified Voyage Data Recorder (S-VDR) is to maintain and store (in a secure and retrievable form) information concerning the position, movement, physical status, command and control of a vessel over the period leading upto and following an incident / casualty.

6. The information contained in the VDR / S-VDR is to be retrieved and used during the subsequent investigation. For a vessel operating in shallow waters, cost of recovery of fixed VDR recording medium may not be very expensive. However, in case a vessel is lost in deep waters, the cost of recovery of the recording medium may be prohibitive and at times not feasible at all.

7. In view of the foregoing, it has been decided that all Indian ships shall install the float-free variety of the VDR / S-VDR. However, if the shipowner has already installed the fixed type of VDR or it is not possible to install the float-free VDR meeting full requirements of the IMO Resolution, they shall ensure that an additional float-free arrangement may be made to retrieve the following information:
 - i. Date and time
 - ii. Ship's position
 - iii. Speed

- iv. Heading as indicated by ship's compass
- v. Bridge Audio
- vi. Radio - communication Audio
- vii. AIS data
- viii. Engine order and response
- ix. Rudder order and response

8. The information may be retrieved by providing a recording device in an additional buoyant capsule with a locating beacon and having a float-free arrangement. The locating beacon may replace the additional float-free EPIRB required on board Indian ships. Any other alternate means by which the information can be transmitted / transferred to the DGS Communication Centre would also be acceptable provided the information is transmitted immediately on the occurrence of the incident / casualty.

9. All ship masters / navigating officers shall ensure that, in the event of a non-catastrophic incident or casualty, necessary steps are taken to save the data so that the data is not over-written automatically by the equipment.

This is issued with the approval of the Nautical Adviser to the Government of India.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

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