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ACCIDENTS WITH LIFEBOATS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-fifth session (15 to 24 May 2002), considered the issue of the unacceptably high number of accidents with lifeboats that have been occurring over recent years and in which crew were being injured, sometimes fatally, while participating in lifeboat drills and/or inspections.

2 The Committee noted that most accidents fell under the following categories:

- .1 failure of on-load release mechanism;
- .2 inadvertent operation of on-load release mechanism;
- .3 inadequate maintenance of lifeboats, davits and launching equipment;
- .4 communication failures;
- .5 lack of familiarity with lifeboats, davits, equipment and associated controls;
- .6 unsafe practices during lifeboat drills and inspections; and
- .7 design faults other than on-load release mechanisms.

3 Pending further consideration of the problem, the Committee wishes to draw the attention of manufacturers, shipowners, crews and classification societies to the personal injury and loss of life that may follow inadequate attention to the design, construction, maintenance and operation of lifeboats, davits and associated equipment.

4 Member Governments are invited to:

- .1 bring this circular to the attention of their maritime Administrations, relevant industry organizations, manufacturers, shipowners, crews and classification societies;
- .2 take the necessary action to prevent further accidents with lifeboats pending the development of appropriate IMO guidance;
- .3 ensure that:
 - .3.1 on-load release equipment used on ships flying their flag is in full compliance with the requirements of paragraph 4.4.7.6.2.2 of the LSA Code;

- .3.2 all appropriate documentation for the maintenance and adjustment of lifeboats, launching appliances and associated equipment is available on board;
- .3.3 personnel undertaking inspections, maintenance and adjustment of lifeboats, launching appliances and associated equipment are fully trained and familiar with these duties;
- .3.4 maintenance of lifeboats, launching appliances and associated equipment is carried out in accordance with approved established procedures;
- .3.5 lifeboat drills are conducted in accordance with SOLAS regulation III/19.3.3 for the purpose of ensuring that ship's personnel will be able to safely embark and launch the lifeboats in an emergency;
- .3.6 the principles of safety and health at work apply to drills as well;
- .3.7 personnel undertaking maintenance and repair activities are appropriately qualified;
- .3.8 hanging-off pennants should only be used for maintenance purposes and not during training exercises;
- .3.9 all tests required for the design and approval of life-saving appliances are conducted rigorously, according to the guidelines developed by the Organization, in order to identify and rectify any design faults at an early stage;
- .3.10 the equipment is easily accessible for inspections and maintenance and is proven durable in harsh operational conditions, in addition to withstanding prototype tests; and
- .3.11 the approving authorities or bodies pay close attention to proper workmanship and state-of-the-art possibilities when assessing equipment for approval; and
- .4 encourage shipowners, when undertaking maintenance and repair activities, to employ qualified personnel, preferably certified by the manufacturer.

6 Member Governments are further invited, while enforcing the provisions of SOLAS regulation IX/4.3, to ensure that the above issues are addressed through the Safety Management System of the company, as appropriate.