INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

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REVISED RECOMMENDATION ON SAFETY OF PERSONNEL DURING CONTAINER SECURING OPERATIONS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventieth session (7 to 11 December 1998) expressed serious concern at the dangers to personnel working at the top of containers during container securing operations, which result from container securing arrangements being located in difficult and dangerous locations, and approved the Recommendation on safety of personnel during container securing operations (MSC/Circ.886).

2 The Committee at its eighty-fourth session (7 to 16 May 2008) reiterated its concern at the dangers to personnel engaged in the operation of securing containers at deck level and approved the Revised Recommendation on safety of personnel during container securing operations, as set out in the annex.

3 Member Governments are invited to bring this Revised Recommendation to the attention of port authorities, containership owners, designers and all other parties concerned and to consider other positive measures to address this problem in port and when approving cargo securing arrangements, as appropriate.

4 This circular supersedes MSC/Circ.886 on Recommendation on safety of personnel during container securing operations.

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ANNEX

REVISED RECOMMENDATION ON SAFETY OF PERSONNEL DURING CONTAINER SECURING OPERATIONS

1 It has been noted that a number of fatal accidents to crew and dockworkers have involved falls from the top of containers during container securing and unsecuring operations. Although fall protection and fall arrest systems and equipment are available for use whenever container top work is involved, they are cumbersome and reduce the speed of loading and unloading operations of a ship, and thus of limited use and effect.

2 The conventional means of securing containers in non-cellular deck spaces are heavy and difficult to handle, resulting in accidents and non-fatal physical injuries. Newly developed equipment such as semi-automatic and dual function twistlocks are only partially effective in eliminating danger. They depend on the stacking height of containers on deck not exceeding four and require a safe work place on the quayside for their application or removal.

3 A safer environment for personnel involved in the securing of containers can be achieved by shipowners and ship designers focusing on the safety of container securement at the initial stages of the building of a ship, rather than relying on operational methods for this purpose after the ship is built. Such successful current design ideas include:

.1 Hatchless holds

These containership designs usually have cell guides to the full height of stowage and do not normally require container top working.

.2 Flexible boxship arrangements

These designs are involved on deck cell guides which can be altered in length to accommodate the different lengths of container currently used in the industry, e.g. 20, 30 or 40 feet.

.3 Deck cell guides

This usually means either "hatchless holds" or a hatchless ship, but designs exist with cell guides on deck but also with hatch covers. Although deck cell guides have a good safety and securement record, they can create operational inconvenience when loading the varying lengths of container that are commonly in use.

.4 Lashing frames

These are mobile personnel carriers by which lashing personnel work on the twistlocks without having to climb upon the container tops. These are often used from container gantries but are operationally more convenient when independent of the shore gantries so that lashing/unlashing can continue without interfering with, and causing delay to, the loading/unloading operation.

.5 Lashing platform

These are permanent or partly mobile platforms, whereby access to deck twistlocks, etc., can be achieved without having to climb on the top of the container.

4 In addition to these alternative arrangements, new and equally effective concepts are likely to evolve if increased attention is given to the achievement of safe securing and unsecuring of containers at the ship design stage instead of relying upon operational methods for this purpose. If the process of securing is made safer for the personnel involved and more efficient, a reduction in the loss of containers overboard will provide financial and environmental benefits.

5 Containership owners and designers are therefore reminded of the dangers associated with container securing operations and urged to use and develop container securing systems which are safe by design, with the aim of eliminating the need for container top work, work in other equally hazardous locations, or the handling by crew or dock workers of heavy and unwieldy securing equipment.

6 Information provided by document MSC 80/21/7 indicated an increase in injuries arising from the operation of lashing containers at deck level. Research in the United Kingdom has shown that 40% of accidents to dockworkers occur on board ships and the majority of these are related to lashing activities on container ships. In many cases the design and layout of lashing arrangements on such ships take insufficient account of the safety of the crew and dockworkers required to handle the lashing equipment. As a consequence, a new annex to the CSS Code has been adopted and all relevant parties are urged to reflect it in their provisions.

7 Personnel engaged in securing operations should be familiarized with the unique vessel characteristics and potential hazards arising from such operations. Training should include situational awareness to identify and avoid hazards.

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