

CAYMAN ISLANDS SHIPPING REGISTRY

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Shipping Notice - CISN 02/95 – Lifeboats

On-Load Lifeboat Release Mechanisms

To: OWNERS, OPERATORS, MANAGERS AND MASTERS OF CAYMAN REGISTERED VESSELS

1. A number of accidents have been reported as a result of the inadvertent operation of the 'on-load' release mechanism of lifeboat lifting hooks during routine lifeboat drills. In one instance fatalities to seamen resulted and in other cases serious injuries have been sustained by crewmembers.
2. A lifeboat release gear meeting the requirements of the 1983 Amendments to the International Convention for the Safety Of Life At Sea, 1974 (SOLAS 74) is a complex mechanism and most accidents have been attributed to a lack of understanding of how this equipment works in relation to:
 - (a) satisfactory release of the boat during launching;
 - (b) the safe and effective re-connection of the boat for hoisting following a launching.
3. Damage and casualties can result from either of these operations if crewmembers are not familiar with the operating procedures and fail to understand the principles of operation of the mechanism. Particular care needs to be taken to ensure that the 'on-load' hooks are properly connected to the lifting rings and the operating mechanism is locked in place before starting to launch or hoist the boat.
4. In addition, the equipment needs to be maintained and serviced regularly by trained and competent persons to ensure that casualties do not result from a malfunction. Provisions should be incorporated in the davit construction and design to enable the lifeboats to be hung off from the davits thus allowing maintenance work and testing to be carried out on the release mechanism in a safe and effective manner.

5. During the next annual or renewal survey of Cayman Island registered vessels, the attending surveyor will be called upon to pay special attention to the lifeboat launching arrangements and, where 'on-load' release mechanisms are fitted, will report details (i.e. makers, date of manufacture, condition etc.) to the Administration. In such cases the surveyor will need to confirm that the mechanisms are in a serviceable condition and operate satisfactorily. The surveyor will also be requested to confirm that:
- (a) there is provision for hanging-off the lifeboat from the davits with special lugs and pendants so as to free the release gears for maintenance purposes without having to lower the boat into the water. The hanging-off pendants should be clearly marked.
 - (b) a suitable instruction and maintenance manual for such release mechanisms, in an appropriate language, is supplied on board by the lifeboat manufacturer or the manufacturer of the release mechanism, together with any updating material;
 - (c) the manual is readily available to and understood by all crewmembers and in particular the person in charge of the lifeboat operation;
 - (d) the manual contains relevant information for the satisfactory release and safe re-connection of the lifeboat hooks;
 - (e) the manual contains a list of replaceable parts for the equipment and the source from which such parts can be obtained;
 - (f) the manual has clear instructions as to the labels that are to be fitted to the release mechanism and that such labels are actually fitted;
 - (g) the manual contains a checklist of items that can readily be inspected by the operators before the boat is lowered or hoisted;
 - (h) the shipboard check list in use for carrying out inspections of life saving equipment includes check list details of the lifeboat 'on-load' release mechanism, as provided in the manufacturer's manual;
 - (i) a log for the records of inspections, maintenance and testing of the 'on-load' mechanisms is on board and properly maintained;
 - (j) on board crew training in the use of the ship's life saving appliances includes safe operational use of lifeboat release mechanisms.

Masters of vessels with lifeboats fitted with on-load release mechanisms should be guided accordingly.