

CAYMAN ISLANDS SHIPPING REGISTRY

3rd Floor, Kirk House,
22 Albert Panton Street
P.O. Box 2256, George Town
Grand Cayman,
Cayman Islands



Fax: +1 (345) 949 8849
Tel: +1 (345) 949 8831
E-mail: cisr@candw.ky
Web site: www.caymarad.org

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The Carriage, Inspection and Testing of Immersions Suits onboard Cayman Islands Ships.

To: OWNERS, MANAGERS, MASTERS, SURVEYORS AND CLASSIFICATION SOCIETIES

1. Background

- 1.1. During the 78th meeting of the Maritime Safety Committee of IMO, amendments to SOLAS regulation III/32.3 were adopted. Under these amendments all cargo¹ ships, regardless of their date of construction, will be required to provide immersion suits for every person onboard not later than the first Safety Equipment survey after 01 July 2006.
- 1.2. Administrations may exempt ships (other than bulk carriers) from this requirement if they are satisfied that the voyage pattern of the ship makes the carriage of immersion suits unnecessary. Applications for such exemptions will be considered by the Cayman Islands Shipping Registry (CISR) on an individual "case by case" basis only.
- 1.3. In addition to the requirements of SOLAS and the Life Saving Appliance (LSA) Code, IMO has published a number of circulars relating to the inspection and testing of immersion suits. MSC Circular MSC/Circ.1047 gives "Guidelines for monthly inspection of immersion suits and anti-exposure suits by ships' crews.". MSC Circular MSC/Circ.1114 gives "Guidelines for the periodic testing of immersion suits and anti-exposure suit seams and closures".

2. MSC Circular MSC/Circ.1047.

- 2.1. This circular details the monthly onboard checks which should be conducted and recorded to meet the requirements of SOLAS III/36.1
- 2.2. The checks include:
 - 2.2.1. Closures and the general condition of the storage bag to check ease of removal of the suit from the storage bag, to confirm donning instructions are legible and confirmation that the suit is the type and size identified on the bag.
 - 2.2.2. Visual inspection of the suit confirming that it is dry inside and out and free of rips, tears or punctures. Any rips, tears or punctures are to be repaired by a repair station authorized by the suit manufacturer. Until repaired, the suit is to be removed from service.

¹ SOLAS Chapter I, Part A Regulation 2(f): "A cargo ship is any ship which is not a passenger ship".

- 2.2.3. Confirmation that all zippers are free and operating correctly. All zippers should be lubricated in accordance with manufactures recommendations. If a zipper is not functional, the suit must be removed from service and discarded or returned to the manufacturer or a suitable repair station.
- 2.2.4. Any inflatable head support and/or buoyancy ring is to be checked for damage and to ensure it remains properly attached. At least quarterly, the head support/buoyancy ring is to be inflated and tested for leaks. Any leaks are to be repaired by a repair station authorized by the suit manufacturer.
- 2.2.5. Records of the above checks are to be kept in accordance with SOLAS III/20.7 and SOLAS III/36.7.

2.3. MSC Circular MSC/Circ.1114.

- 2.3.1. This circular details the testing requirements for immersion suit and anti-exposure suit seams and closures. Paragraph 3 of the annex to this circular detail the air pressure testing requirements. On Cayman Islands ships, these tests are to be carried out every three years for suits up to ten years of age and annually for suits over ten years of age.
- 2.3.2. These air pressure tests and any subsequent repairs should be undertaken by a test / repair station authorized by the suit manufacturer.
- 2.3.3. Records of the last air pressure test of the immersion suits are to be retained onboard.

3. Required actions.

- 3.1. Persons with responsibilities relating to compliance matters on Cayman Islands ships are requested to ensure that such ships are in full compliance with both the current and future requirements for the carriage of immersion suits.
- 3.2. Such persons are also urged to ensure that sufficient extra immersion suits are carried so that if immersion suits are found to be unsuitable for continued service at any of the required inspections and tests, the ship continues to comply with the requirements.