

Long-range identification and tracking of ships - SOLAS amendment enters into force

A new SOLAS regulation on long-range identification and tracking of ships enters into force on 1 January 2008, giving SOLAS Contracting Governments a year to set up and test the LRIT system and ship operators a year to start fitting the necessary equipment or upgrading so that their ships can transmit LRIT information.

This is among a series of amendments to IMO instruments entering into force on the same day, covering training requirements for ship security officers, launching/recovery of fast rescue boats and including an amendment to the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code - May 2006 amendments to SOLAS - LRIT. The regulation in SOLAS chapter V Safety of Navigation, introduces LRIT as a mandatory requirement for the following ships on international voyages: passenger ships, including high-speed craft; cargo ships, including high-speed craft, of 300 gross tonnage and upward; and mobile offshore drilling units. Ships constructed on or after 31 December 2008 must be fitted with a system to transmit automatically the identity of the ship, the position of the ship (latitude and longitude) and the date and time of the position provided. Ships constructed before 31 December 2008 and certified for operations in sea areas A1 and A2, or A1, A2 and A3, must be fitted with the equipment not later than the first survey of the radio installation after 31 December 2008. Ships constructed before 31 December 2008 certified for operations in sea areas A1, A2, A3 and A4, must comply not later than the first survey of the radio installation after 1 July 2009 (but must comply earlier, as above, if they operate within sea areas A2 and A3). Ships operating exclusively in sea area A1 and fitted with an automatic identification system (AIS) are exempted from the requirement to transmit LRIT information.

The LRIT system is intended to be operational with respect to the transmission of LRIT information by ships from 30 December 2008. Minimum training requirements for ship security officers Amendments to the STCW convention and Code, adopted in May 2006 and entering into force on 1 January 2008, add new minimum mandatory training and certification requirements for persons to be designated as ship security officers (SSOs). The amendments to the STCW Convention and to parts A and B of the STCW Code include Requirements for the issue of certificates of proficiency for Ship Security Officers; Specifications of minimum standards of proficiency for ship security officers; and Guidance regarding training for Ship Security Officers.

The amendments also provide that until 1 July 2009, an STCW Party may continue to recognize personnel who hold or can document qualifications as ship security officers issued before the entry into force of the regulation.

Fast rescue boats Amendments to part A of the STCW Code, also entering into force on 1 January 2008, add additional training requirements for the launching and recovery of fast rescue boats. The amendments were adopted in response to reports of injuries to seafarers in numerous incidents involving the launching and recovery of fast rescue boats in adverse weather conditions.

Amendments to the IMDG Code Amendments to the IMDG Code (Amendment 33-06) also enter into force on 1 January 2008. The amendments include those prepared on the basis of proposals received from Member Governments and Organizations and those prepared by the UN Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals. The amendments include changes relating to the requirements for transport of ethylene oxide with nitrogen up to a total pressure of 1 Mpa (10 bar) at 50C (UN 1040); polymeric beads (UN 2211); plastics moulding compound (UN 3314); ammonium nitrate (UN 1942) and ammonium nitrate fertilizer (UN 2067); segregation provisions for class 8 acids and alkalis when not in limited quantities; and the packaging of articles containing dangerous goods in limited quantities.

Source: IMO