



SOLAS CONVENTION



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Spring 2026

Chapters IV and V: GMDSS Information Services and VDES

SOLAS was amended at MSC 111 to strengthen dissemination of maritime safety information and formally introduce the VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) into the regulatory framework.

The amendments include:

- **Regulation IV/5.3:** Contracting Governments must use all operational recognized mobile satellite services (RMSSs) in their area of responsibility when disseminating maritime safety information (MSI) and search and rescue (SAR)-related information via the Enhanced Group Call service.
- **Regulations V/4 and V/5:** navigational warning and meteorological warning provisions were revised to align with the updated GMDSS information dissemination framework.
- **Regulation V/18:** performance standards for shipborne VDES were added, and annual testing requirements now apply to AIS or VDES.
- **Regulation V/19:** VDES is permitted as an alternative to AIS.
- **Regulation V/19-1:** ships fitted with AIS or VDES and operating exclusively within sea area A1 are exempted from LRIT requirements.
- **Appendix / Record of Equipment forms:** references were updated from AIS to AIS or VDES.

The Committee also adopted a Resolution establishing that references to "automatic identification system" or "AIS" within the IMO regulatory framework should be understood to encompass the AIS component of VDES. Performance standards for shipborne VDES were adopted, and guidelines for the operational use of shipborne VDES were approved.

Effective Date: 1 January 2028

Sources: MSC 111 adopted amendments to the 1974 SOLAS Convention (May 2026); Performance Standards for Shipborne VDES; Guidelines for Operational Use of Shipborne VDES



Chapter II-2/Regulations 13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1: Escape Trunk Interpretation

Following discussion at MSC 110 and SDC 12, the Committee agreed to issue a revised circular clarifying the meaning of the term "lower part of the space" in SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1.

The revised interpretation confirms that the term should be regarded as either:

- the lowest deck level; or
- a platform or passageway.

SDC 12 concluded that no safety issues were demonstrated resulting from the application of the existing regulations and that no SOLAS amendments were needed. The Committee recognized that outright revocation of the original circular (MSC.1/Circ.1689) without replacement could lead to a recurrence of divergent port State control interpretations. The revised circular disseminates the definitive position that current arrangements provide a satisfactory level of safety.

Port State Control (PSC) officers should in principle accept the design arrangement approved by the flag State and, when appropriate, consult with the flag Administration.

Effective Date: May 2026

Source: MSC.1/Circ.1689/Rev.1 (revokes MSC.1/Circ.1689)



Chapter III/Regulation 19: Abandon Ship Drills Using Lifeboats

MSC 111 adopted amendments to SOLAS Chapter III, regulation 19, updating references regarding emergency training and drills, specifically for abandon ship drills using lifeboats. Associated amendments to the Life-Saving Appliance (LSA) Code, including a new paragraph 4.7.7, establish requirements for arrangements to test the release system of free-fall lifeboats under load without launching the lifeboat into the water. The arrangement must be designed with a safety factor of at least 6 based on maximum working load, and components exposed to the marine environment must be corrosion-resistant without reliance on coatings or galvanizing.

Consequential amendments were also adopted to the requirements for maintenance, thorough examination, operational testing, overhaul and repair of lifeboats and rescue boats, launching appliances and release gear (resolution MSC.402(96)).

Effective Date: 1 January 2028 (LSA Code paragraph 4.7.7 applies to free-fall lifeboats installed on or after 1 January 2031)

Sources: LSA Code; amendments to MSC.402(96); amendments to MSC.81(70)



Summer 2025

Chapter V/Regulation 23: Pilot Transfer Arrangements

SOLAS Chapter V, regulation 23, was completely replaced to improve pilot transfer safety and to provide more detailed structural and operational requirements for pilot ladders, combination arrangements, securing means, handrails, stanchions and related equipment.

The amendments are intended to ensure safe arrangements for pilots and other personnel embarking and disembarking ships in all conditions of draught and trim. The use of mechanical pilot hoists is forbidden.

Pilot transfer arrangements installed on or after 1 January 2028 must be designed, manufactured, constructed, secured and installed in accordance with the new performance standards. "Installed" refers to the contractual delivery date of the arrangement, or the actual delivery date if no contract exists.

For arrangements installed before 1 January 2028:

- Ships to which SOLAS Chapter I applies must comply no later than the first survey on or after 1 January 2029.
- Ships to which SOLAS Chapter I does not apply must comply no later than 1 January 2030.

Inspection, stowage, maintenance, replacement and familiarization requirements for all pilot transfer arrangements, regardless of installation date, will enter into force on 1 January 2028.

The associated performance standards for pilot transfer arrangements were adopted by resolution MSC.576(110), revoking resolutions A.1045(27) and A.1108(29).

Effective Date: 1 January 2028

Sources: MSC.572(110) and MSC.576(110); voluntary early implementation circular MSC.1/Circ.1690



Chapter II-2/Regulation 11: Structural Integrity Clarification

SOLAS Chapter II-2, regulation 11, was amended to clarify requirements for structural integrity and insulation standards for passenger and cargo ships.

The amendments refine the application of materials and insulation requirements for superstructures, bulkheads, decks and deckhouses, and provide additional clarification for spaces of category A. Specifically, sections 2 and 4.1 were amended to elaborate on the applicable fire integrity tables (tables 9.1–9.8) and on insulation to be provided for crowns and casings for machinery spaces of category A.

Effective Date: 1 January 2028

Source: MSC.572(110)



Chapter II-1/Regulation 12.6.2: Unified Interpretation – Remotely Controlled Valves

A unified interpretation was approved to clarify the term "remotely controlled valve" in SOLAS regulation II-1/12.6.2.

The interpretation confirms that:

- The valve fitted on a pipe piercing a ship's collision bulkhead below the bulkhead deck of passenger ships and the freeboard deck of cargo ships may be either a deck standing manual type or a mechanically powered type with a fail-close arrangement.
- For the purpose of the fail-close arrangement, the valve should be of an automatic fail-close type or should have an additional manual-closing function activated from a position above the bulkhead deck of passenger ships and the freeboard deck of cargo ships.

The circular includes illustrations of allowable and non-allowable arrangements.

Effective Date: 25 June 2025

Source: MSC.1/Circ.1692



Chapter II-1/Regulation 3-4: Emergency Towing Guidelines for Ships Other Than Tankers

In conjunction with the new emergency towing requirements adopted at MSC 108 (MSC.549(108)), MSC 110 approved interim guidelines for emergency towing arrangements on ships other than tankers.

The guidelines provide standardized guidance on the design, deployment and stowage of emergency towing equipment to be fitted on ships other than tankers of 20,000 gross tonnage and above, supporting the implementation of SOLAS regulation II-1/3-4 when it enters into force on 1 January 2028.

Effective Date: June 2025 (supporting guidelines for regulations effective 1 January 2028)

Source: MSC.1/Circ.1691



Chapter II-2: Unified Interpretations – PFOS in Fire-Extinguishing Media

A unified interpretation was approved to clarify SOLAS regulation II-2/10.11.2.2 and paragraph 7.9.4 of the HSC Code regarding the permissible values of perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) in fire-extinguishing media and procedures for verification.

The amendments adopted by MSC 107 prohibiting the use and storage of fire-extinguishing media containing PFOS did not specify how compliance would be demonstrated. The unified interpretation provides the permissible PFOS concentration limits and defines the sampling, testing and verification activities for fire-extinguishing media, including firefighting foams.

Effective Date: June 2025

Source: MSC.1/Circ.1694



Chapter II-1/Regulation 3-13.2.4: Unified Interpretation – Lifting Appliances Documentation

A unified interpretation was approved to clarify SOLAS regulation II-1/3-13.2.4 regarding the documentation requirements for load testing and thorough examination of existing non-certified lifting appliances.

Effective Date: June 2025

Source: MSC.1/Circ.1696



Fall 2024

Chapters II-1 and II-2: Unified Interpretations – Fire Safety, Propulsion and Piping

MSC 109 approved a series of unified interpretations providing clarification on several SOLAS Chapter II-1 and II-2 requirements.

The unified interpretations include:

- Regulation II-2/4.5.6.1 – Cargo/vapour piping on tankers:** clarifies that all cargo piping (including cargo tank venting piping, relief valve discharge piping, cargo tank purging and gas-freeing piping/ducts), except those serving for inerting gas supply and for bow or stern loading/unloading arrangements, should be arranged within the cargo areas. Gas-freeing air-supply fan(s)/piping/ducts may be located in the forecastle area with isolation arrangements. (MSC.1/Circ.1683)
- Regulation II-2/11.4.1 – Crown of a machinery space of category A:** clarifies that the "crown" of a machinery space of category A should be understood to mean the underside of the deck and the uppermost horizontal part of the main space of the machinery space. If the upper side bulkheads are sloping, the sloping parts should be included in the crown. The circular also addresses SOLAS regulations II-2/4.5.3.2.2 and 11.6.3.2 on the secondary means of venting cargo tanks, including pressure/vacuum valve alarm settings. (MSC.1/Circ.1684)
- Chapter II-2 – Revised unified interpretations:** rectification of an oversight regarding references to SOLAS regulation II-2/9.7.5.1. (MSC.1/Circ.1276/Rev.2)
- Regulation II-1/26 – Single essential propulsion components:** clarifies that single electric propulsion motors (both single and dual winding with a single rotor) should not be considered to provide the reliability required for a single essential propulsion component. A separate propulsion unit sufficient to give the ship navigable speed should be provided for such arrangements. Propulsion arrangements with two independent rotors on a single shaft may be accepted, provided it is possible to de-excite or de-flux each rotor individually and supply the stators independently. Applies to propulsion systems installed on passenger ships on or after 1 January 2026. (MSC.1/Circ.1685)



Effective Dates: Various; MSC.1/Circ.1683 and MSC.1/Circ.1685 apply from 1 January 2026; MSC.1/Circ.1684 and MSC.1/Circ.1276/Rev.2 apply from date of approval (6 December 2024).

Sources: MSC.1/Circ.1683, MSC.1/Circ.1684, MSC.1/Circ.1276/Rev.2, MSC.1/Circ.1685

Chapters IV/10 and IV/15 and COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.2: Inconsistent Implementation

MSC 109 considered a submission identifying inconsistent implementation of SOLAS regulations IV/10 and IV/15, read together with COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.2, concerning the medium frequency (MF) radio installation required for ships operating in sea area A3.

The Committee agreed to revise the circular, amending footnote 6 to the table beneath paragraph 2.3 to confirm that a single MF/high frequency (HF) radio installation may be accepted both as the primary MF radio installation and as the duplicated MF/HF radio installation, as provided in the circular.

The Committee accordingly approved COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.3 on the Harmonization of Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) Requirements for Radio Installations on Board SOLAS Ships. The practical effect is as follows:

- Administrations and recognised organisations should apply a consistent interpretation where duplication of equipment is used to meet the radio maintenance requirements of SOLAS regulation IV/15.
- Ships operating in sea area A3 need not install a separate MF installation in addition to a duplicated MF/HF installation.
- COMSAR.1/Circ.32/Rev.2 is superseded.

Effective Date: 1 January 2024.

Sources: MSC.496(105)



Spring 2024

Chapter II-1/Regulation 3-4: Emergency Towing Arrangements

SOLAS Chapter II-1 has been amended to extend emergency towing arrangement requirements beyond tankers. New requirements now apply to ships other than tankers of 20,000 gross tonnage and above in order to facilitate emergency assistance and towing operations and reduce the risk of ship wreckage and pollution.

These amendments introduce a new requirement for emergency towing arrangements to be fitted on applicable new ships.

Effective Date: 1 January 2028

Source: MSC.549(108)



Chapters II-2 and V: Fire Safety and Reporting of Lost Containers

SOLAS Chapters II-2 and V were amended to address several distinct safety issues.

The amendments include:

- **Regulation II-2/4 – Probability of ignition:** additional provisions regarding oil fuel parameters other than flashpoint, requiring that oil fuel delivered to and used on board ships shall not jeopardize the safety of ships or adversely affect machinery performance or personnel safety.
- **Regulation II-2/7 – Detection and alarm:** fire detection requirements were extended to control stations and cargo control rooms.
- **Regulation II-2/20 – Protection of vehicle, special category and ro-ro spaces:** enhanced fire safety provisions for ro-ro passenger ships, including new requirements for fixed water-based fire-extinguishing systems on weather decks intended for the carriage of vehicles.
- **Regulation V/31 – Danger messages:** amendments require reporting of the loss or observation of freight containers drifting at sea.

These changes collectively strengthen fire safety and improve navigational hazard reporting.

Effective Date: 1 January 2026

Source: MSC.550(108)



Chapters II-1 and XII: Unified Interpretation – Means of Access and Water Level Detectors

A revised unified interpretation was adopted for SOLAS Chapters II-1 and XII, the Technical Provisions for Means of Access for Inspections (resolution MSC.158(78)), and the Performance Standards for Water Level Detectors.

The revision provides updated interpretation and implementation guidance for inspection access arrangements and for water level detector application on ships subject to SOLAS regulations II-1/25, II-1/25-1 and XII/12.

The circular also clarifies transition arrangements, noting that MSC.1/Circ.1572/Rev.1 remains valid for certain cases until 1 January 2025.

Effective Date: 17 June 2024

Source: MSC.1/Circ.1572/Rev.2



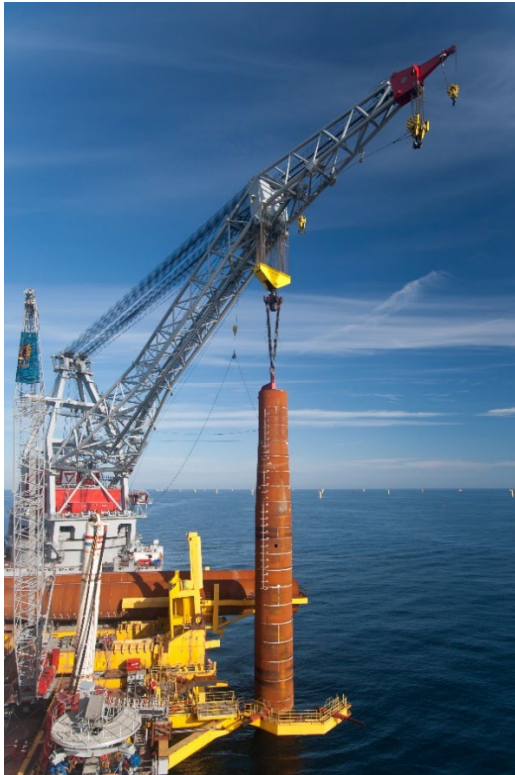
Chapter XV/Regulation 5.1: Unified Interpretation – Industrial Personnel Safety Certificate

A unified interpretation was adopted on SOLAS regulation XV/5.1 and paragraph 3.5 of part 1 of the IP Code to harmonize the Industrial Personnel Safety Certificate with SOLAS safety certificates.

The interpretation provides guidance on certificate harmonization for ships carrying industrial personnel and clarifies how the Industrial Personnel Safety Certificate is to align with the existing SOLAS certification framework.

Effective Date: 14 June 2024

Source: MSC.1/Circ.1680



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