



# Carriage of Immersion Suits onboard Panamanian Flagged Vessels

Notice to: Ship Owners/ Managers/ Operators | Surveyors/Auditors

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The Panama Maritime Administration issued Merchant Marine Circular MMC-144 with purpose to inform users regarding the full implementation of the carriage of immersion suits (including the hermetically packed) and anti-exposure suits on board the Panamanian flagged ships.

## Applicability

This circular applies to all Panamanian flag cargo ships and to passenger ships as described in the Chapter III Regulation 22.4 of SOLAS Convention, as amended

## Background

The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of the International Maritime Organization, adopted on May 20, 2004, through Resolution MSC.152(78) amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of the life at Sea (SOLAS), 74, as amended. These amendments entered into force on July 1, 2006. F-33 (DCCM) V.04 4.

## Requirement

New cargo ships constructed after July 1, 2006 and existing cargo ships no later than the first safety equipment survey on or after July 1, 2006 shall carry immersion suits for every person onboard the ship

subject to these regulations and based in the Safety Equipment Certificate (Form E). Suitable immersion Suits should also be provided for children where carried.

Any ship subject to this regulation will also provide additional immersion suits so that individuals who will be working some distance from the place where a crewman's immersion suit is stored. These places will include, but not limited to the Navigation Bridge, Engine Room, and any other places onboard the ship that in accordance with the type of ship should be considered as a permanent working place. On the above-mentioned places, the ship must carry two (2) Immersion suits because in an emergency it is unreasonable to expect a crewman could acquire the assigned immersion suit.

Immersion suits and thermal protective aids are to be assigned by the Master. It is recommended that they should be kept in the crew cabins along with life jackets.

An immersion suit of an appropriate size shall be provided for every person on board the ship required by SOLAS, Regulation III/32.3.2 for cargo ships. All passenger ships shall carry for each lifeboat on the ship at least three immersion suits and in addition a thermal protective aid for every person to be accommodated in the lifeboat and not provided with an immersion suit required by Regulation III/22.4.1 for passenger vessels.

Sufficient number of IMS onboard for use during drills, for crew training purposes only.

They may be kept in the cabins of the assigned personnel. In addition, all persons in the crew of a rescue boat are to be provided with immersion suits if different from the persons in charge of the lifeboat noted above.

For cargo vessels less than 85 meters in length other than oil tankers, chemical tankers and gas carriers operating above 30 ° North and below 30 ° South latitudes, where only life rafts are carried in accordance with SOLAS, Chapter III, Regulation 31.1.3, all persons are to be provided with immersion suits.

A ship other than bulk carrier as defined in regulation 1/ IX of SOLAS 1974, as amended, which is constantly engaged on voyages in Warm Climates, between Latitude 30 ° degrees North and 30 o degrees South), may be exempted from the said requirements.

All immersion suits must comply with the requirements of Regulation 2.3 of the Life Saving Appliances Code published by the IMO.

Ship shall continue to carry the number of Lifejackets Required by Regulation 7.2/III of SOLAS 74, as amended, when the immersion suits are classified as Lifejackets.

## Inspection and Services

The monthly inspection and the periodic testing of the immersion suit using conventional packing method should be carried out as required by SOLAS, Regulation III/20.7.2 and MSC/Circ. 1047 adopted on 28 May 2002.

- Check closures and general condition on storage bags
- Ensure donning instructions are legible
- Check the type and size identified on the bag is inside
- Inspect the seams and closures, if any damage found it should be repaired according to manufacturer instructions.
- Verify that the suit is dry (inside and outside), the zipper must be ease of operation
- Check the condition of the reflective tape
- If fitted, check the whistle, expiration of light and battery
- The suits should be replaced in the bag with zippers fully opened
- A practice of donning the suit should be done at monthly inspection

The monthly inspection of the hermetically packed immersion suits which helps to preserve the equipment from adverse effects of environment, temperature and saltiness, have to be performed taking into account the following items:

- Hermetically packed immersion suits should be packaged in a transparent container for monthly visual inspection;
- Manufacturers' instructions must be followed during the monthly inspection and test processes, (refer to MSC/Circ.1047 – dated May 28, 2002 – Guidelines for Monthly Shipboard Inspection of Immersion Suits and Anti-Exposure Suits by Ships Crews);
- If during the visual inspection it is detected that any seal or the packing itself deteriorates, it must be replaced immediately;
- The air pressure test required by MSC/Circ.1114 should be conducted by an authorized service station at 3 years intervals
- The inspection process for suits that are more than 10 years old, should be done annually by an authorized service provider (MSC/Circ.1114).

### Act now

Ship Owners/ Managers/ Operators should take into consideration the above requirements concerning immersion suits on board Panamanian flagged vessels.

Surveyors / Auditors shall ensure compliance with the above requirements during respective surveys / audits.