INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION
4 ALBERT EMBANKMENT
LONDON SE1 7SR

Telephone: 020 7735 7611
Fax: 020 7587 3210

IMO

E

Ref. T2-MSS/2.11.1

MSC/Circ.1155
23 May 2005

GUIDANCE ON THE MESSAGE PRIORITY AND THE TESTING OF SHIP SECURITY ALERT SYSTEMS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee (the Committee), at its seventy-eighth session (12 to 21 May 2004), instructed the Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR Sub-Committee) to consider questions relating to the message priority and the testing of ship security alert systems and to develop, if necessary, guidance to this end.

2 The COMSAR Sub-Committee, at its ninth session (7 to 11 February 2005), considered the matter and submitted its recommendations on the issue to the Committee.

3 The Committee, at its eightieth session (11 to 20 May 2005), considered the recommendation of the COMSAR Sub-Committee and approved the Guidance on the message priority and the testing of ship security alert systems (the Guidance), as set out at annex.

4 SOLAS Contracting Governments are invited to bring the Guidance to the attention of all parties concerned with matters relating with ship security alerts and systems.

5 SOLAS Contracting Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations with consultative status which encounter difficulties with the implementation of the Guidance should bring, at the earliest opportunity, the matter to the attention of the Committee for consideration of the issues involved and decision on the actions to be taken.

***

ANNEX

GUIDANCE ON THE MESSAGE PRIORITY AND THE TESTING OF SHIP SECURITY ALERT SYSTEMS

I Message priority

1 The Committee, being aware of the message priority requirements applicable to satellite communications, and given the diversity of ship security alert systems, agreed that there was no need to develop a message priority requirement for ship security alerts.

2 Ship security alert system communication service providers should deliver the ship security alert messages without delay so as to permit the relevant competent authorities to take appropriate action.

3 Ship security alerts may be addressed to more than one recipient, as designated by the Administration, in order to enhance the resilience of the ship security alert system.

4 The Committee urged once more those SOLAS Contracting Governments that had yet to establish criteria for the delivery of ship security alerts, to do so as a matter of priority.

5 SOLAS regulation XI-2/13.1.3 requires SOLAS Contracting Governments to communicate to the Organization and to make available to Companies and ships the names and contact details of those who have been designated to be available at all times (twenty-four hours a day seven days a week) to receive and act upon ship security alerts.

6 Administrations should ensure that their designated recipients of ship security alerts are capable of processing the information received with the highest priority and taking appropriate actions.

II Testing

1 The Committee agreed that there was a need for ship security alert systems to be subject to testing.

2 However, given the multiplicity of ship security alert systems and the fact that a number of systems in use already had test procedures in place, the Committee decided that it would be impractical to develop a test protocol to cover all systems.

3 The Committee thus agreed that the development of procedures and protocols for testing ship security alert systems were a matter for individual Administrations.

4 Ships, Companies, Administrations and recognized security organizations should ensure that when ship security alert systems are to be tested those concerned are notified so that the testing of the ship security alert system does not inadvertently lead to unintended emergency response actions.

5 When the ship security alert system accidentally transmits, during testing, a ship security alert, ships, Companies, Administrations and recognized security organizations should act expeditiously to ensure that all concerned parties are made aware that the alert is false and that no emergency response action should be taken.
