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MSC.1/Circ.1691
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INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR EMERGENCY TOWING ARRANGEMENTS ON SHIPS OTHER THAN TANKERS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 108th session (15 to 24 May 2024), adopted resolution MSC.549(108), containing amendments to SOLAS regulation II-1/3-4 in relation to new requirements for new ships, other than tankers, of not less than 20,000 GT, to be fitted with emergency towing arrangements, with the expected entry-into-force date of 1 January 2028.

2 The Committee, at its 110th session (18 to 27 June 2025), having considered a proposal by the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction, at its eleventh session (13 to 17 January 2025), with a view to ensuring a uniform approach towards the application of the aforementioned SOLAS provisions, approved the *Interim guidelines for emergency towing arrangements on ships other than tankers*, as set out in the annex.

3 Member Governments are invited to use the annexed Interim Guidelines when applying the amended SOLAS regulation II-1/3-4.2, and to bring it to the attention of all parties concerned.

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ANNEX

INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR EMERGENCY TOWING ARRANGEMENTS ON SHIPS OTHER THAN TANKERS

1 PURPOSE

1.1 Under regulation II-1/3-4.2 of the 1974 SOLAS Convention, as amended by resolution MSC.549(108), ships, other than tankers, of not less than 20,000 gross tonnage, constructed on or after 1 January 2028, shall be fitted with an emergency towing arrangement (ETA), the design and construction of which shall be approved by the Administration, based on the Guidelines developed by the Organization.

1.2 The present Interim Guidelines are intended to provide standards for the design and construction of emergency towing arrangements, which Administrations are recommended to implement.

2 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ARRANGEMENTS AND COMPONENTS

2.1 General

The emergency towing arrangements should be so designed as to facilitate emergency towing operations. The arrangements should at all times be capable of rapid deployment in the absence of main power on the ship to be towed and easy connection to the towing vessel.

2.2 Towing components

The major components of the towing arrangements consist of the following:

Components		Strength requirements
Pick-up gear	Optional	---
Towing pennant	Optional	Yes
Chafing gear	Optional	Yes
Closed fairlead such as "Chock"	Depending on design	Yes
Strongpoint such as "Bollard" or "Bitt"	Yes	Yes
Roller pedestal	Depending on design	---

2.3 Strength of the towing components

2.3.1 Towing components, as specified in section 2.2 for strength, should have a working strength sufficient to withstand the required towing load specified in the following table:

Ship with Equipment Number (EN)[1]	**Required towing load (kN)**
EN<3,000	1,000
3,000 ≤EN< 10,000	2,000
EN≥10,000	EN * 0.2 or greater as determined by the Administration

The strength should be sufficient for all relevant angles of towline, i.e. up to 90° from the ship's centreline to port and starboard and 30° vertical downward.

The working strength is defined as one half (0.5) of the ultimate strength.

[1] Equipment Number (EN) should be calculated taking into account MSC.1/Circ.1175/Rev.2.

2.3.2 The required towing load may be achieved by summing the design towing loads of multiple arrangements. When the required towing load is achieved through multiple arrangements, the deployment of all arrangements should be completed within the specified time as required in paragraph 3.1.2.

2.3.3 Other components should have a working strength sufficient to withstand the load to which such components may be subjected during the towing operations.

2.4 Location of strongpoint and closed fairlead

The strong point and closed fairleads, if provided, should be located so as to facilitate towing from either side of the bow or stern and minimize the stress on the towing system.

2.5 Strongpoint

The inboard end fastening should be a stopper, bracket, bollard, bitt, or other fitting of equivalent strength. The strongpoint can be designed integral with the fairlead.

2.6 Closed fairleads

The closed fairlead should be sized to accommodate the towing operation and to provide adequate support for the towing equipment during towing operation.

2.7 Chafing gear

If a chafing gear is provided, it should have the following characteristics:

2.7.1 Type

The chafing chain should be stud link chain.

2.7.2 Length

The chafing gear should be long enough to ensure that the towing pennant remains outside the fairlead during the towing operation. A chain extending from the strongpoint to a point at least 3 m beyond the fairlead should meet this criterion.

2.7.3 Connecting limits

One end of the chafing gear should be suitable for connection to the strongpoint. The other end should be fitted with a standard pear-shaped studless link allowing connection to a standard bow shackle.

2.7.4 Stowage

The chafing gear should be stowed in such a way that it can be rapidly connected to the strongpoint.

2.8 Towing pennant

If a towing pennant is provided, it should have a length of at least twice the lightest seagoing ballast freeboard at the fairlead plus 50 m.

The towing pennant should have a hard eye-formed termination allowing connection to a standard bow shackle.

2.9 Prototype test

Designs of emergency towing arrangements in accordance with these Interim Guidelines should be prototype tested to the satisfaction of the Administration.

Shipboard towing fittings should be demonstrated as adequate for the emergency towing loads by means of a submitted engineering analysis or calculations. If the structural configuration is of a particularly complex or novel nature, such that its load bearing adequacy cannot be satisfactorily determined by engineering analysis, suitable proof test will be required.

Towline components and articles of loose gear should be tested to the satisfaction of the Administration or industry standard acceptable to the Administration. Where a manufacturer requests a certificate of type approval for a component, it should be tested to 200% of its safe working load.

3 READY AVAILABILITY OF TOWING ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 To facilitate approval of such equipment and to ensure rapid deployment, emergency towing arrangements should comply with the following criteria:

.1 the pick-up gear for the towing pennant, if provided, should be designed for manual operation taking into account the absence of power and the potential for adverse environmental conditions that may prevail during such emergency towing operations. The pick-up gear should be protected against the weather and other adverse conditions that may prevail;

.2 the emergency towing arrangement should be capable of being deployed in harbour conditions in not more than one hour;

.3 the emergency towing arrangement should be designed at least with a means of securing a towline to the strong point; and

.4 all emergency towing arrangements should be clearly marked to facilitate safe and effective use even in darkness and poor visibility.

3.2 All emergency towing components should be inspected by ship personnel at regular intervals and maintained in good working order.

3.3 Time for deployment

3.3.1 For the purpose of calculating the "time for deployment" of ETA, the following assumption should apply:

.1 the time starts when the order for deployment of ETA is given:

.1 all relevant personnel are in their designated positions, wearing lifejackets and protective equipment; and

.2 after the appropriate tugboat(s) have arrived at the ship to be towed;[2] and

.2 the time ends when the ETA is fully prepared and readily available to be properly connected to both the ship to be towed and the tugboat(s).

[2] "Time for deployment" does not include the time expended waiting for the arrival of the tugboat(s).

If a towing pennant is equipped on the ship to be towed, the time for deployment of ETA ends when the towing pennant is positioned at an appropriate height near the water surface, neglecting the time for connecting the tow line to the towing pennant.

3.3.2 For example, time for deployment of ETA can be calculated by summing up the estimated times required for relevant procedures, as appropriate, as follows:

.1 preparation of a messenger rope (on the ship to be towed);

.2 deliver the messenger rope to a tugboat;

.3 connect the messenger rope to towing pennant (on a tugboat);

.4 feed the towing pennant from a tugboat to the ship;

.5 temporarily moor the towing pennant to an appropriate bollard on the ship to be towed;

.6 connect eye splice of the towing pennant to the post of bollard; and

.7 wind up the towing pennant by a winch of the tugboat.