

GUIDANCE NOTE 01/2026

IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC)108

Convention and Code Amendments

To: BUILDERS, DESIGNERS, MANAGERS, OWNERS, MASTERS AND RECOGNISED ORGANIZATIONS

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 IMO MSC 108 adopted the following: -

Amendments to the 1974 SOLAS Convention:

- Ch II-1 Reg.3-4 – ships over 20,000GT to be fitted with emergency towing arrangements
- Ch II-2 Reg.4 – oil fuel safety parameters other than flashpoint
- Ch II-7 Reg.7 – fixed fire detection and alarm systems in control stations and cargo control rooms
- Ch II-20 – fire protection of open Ro-Ro spaces
- Ch V Reg.31 – reporting of the loss of containers

Amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F Convention)

Amendments to the International Code of Safety for Ships using Gases or Other Low-Flashpoint Fuels (IGF Code)

Amendments to the International Code for the Safe Carriage of Grain in Bulk (Grain Code)

Amendments to the International Code on the Enhanced Programme of Inspections During Surveys of Bulk Carriers and Oil Tankers, 2011 (ESP Code)

Amendments to the International Life-Saving Appliances (LSA) Code

Amendments to the International Code for Fire Safety Systems (FSS) Code

Amendments to the Seafarers' Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Code

- 1.2 Under the provisions of the Cayman Islands Merchant Shipping Act (MSA) 2024, any amendments to IMO Conventions pertaining to COLREGS, Load Lines, SOLAS, STCW and Tonnage, including any associated codes and any other instruments made mandatory, automatically have the force of law, unless the discretionary powers under section 459(4) of the MSA are invoked via a Shipping Notice.
- 1.3 The purpose of this guidance note is to raise awareness of the various significant amendments which will have the force of law.

2. **AMENDMENTS TO THE 1974 SOLAS CONVENTION**

- 2.1 **Chapter II-1 Reg.3-4.2 Emergency towing arrangements on ships other than tankers**

For ships, other than tankers, constructed on or after 1 January 2028:

.1 the arrangements shall, 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 ship; and

.2 emergency towing arrangements shall be of adequate strength taking into account the size of the ship, and the expected forces during bad weather conditions. The design and construction and prototype testing of emergency towing arrangements shall be approved by the Administration, based on the guidelines developed by the Organization.

Application: For ships other than tankers constructed on or after 1 January 2028.

- 2.2 **Chapter II-2 Reg.4 – Probability of ignition**

New sub-paragraph:-

2.1.9 oil fuel delivered to and used on board ships shall not jeopardize the safety of ships or adversely affect the performance of the machinery or be harmful to personnel.

Application: 1 January 2026

- 2.3 **Chapter II-2 Reg.7 – Detection and alarm**

Paragraph 5.5 'Cargo Ships' has been amended to include coverage of all control stations and cargo controls rooms.

Application: Ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026

2.4 Chapter II-2 Reg.20 Protection of vehicle, special category and ro-ro spaces

The title of this regulation 20 is replaced by "Protection of vehicle, special category, open and closed ro-ro spaces, and weather decks intended for the carriage of vehicles".

Video monitoring is now required for vehicle, special category or ro-ro spaces on passenger ships.

Fixed fire extinguishing systems based on monitors are now required on weather decks intended for carriage of vehicles.

Changes to the fire detection and alarm systems, and structural fire protection arrangements for new ships only.

New requirements for signage and marking of fixed firefighting sections to aid in onboard decision making in a fire scenario.

Application: Ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026. Existing ships no later than the first survey on or after 1 January 2028 (fixed fire-extinguishing systems part only).

2.5 Chapter V Reg.31 – *Danger Messages (Freight Containers)*

A ship's master is to communicate the loss of freight containers to ships in the vicinity, to the nearest Coastal State and the vessel's Flag State without delay; the Flag State is to then report this information on IMO's GISIS platform.

Application: 1 January 2026

3. AMENDMENTS TO THE STCW-F CONVENTION

Adopted the revised 1995 STCW-F Convention, containing training, certification and watchkeeping provisions for fishing vessel personnel.

Application: 1 January 2026

4. AMENDMENTS TO THE IGF CODE

Numerous significant amendments based on experience with the code since its entry into force in 2017.

Application: Ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026

5. AMENDMENTS TO THE GRAIN CODE

The amendments include provisions for a ‘specially suitable compartment partly filled in way of the hatch opening, with ends untrimmed’; although the compartment must at least be filled to the level of bottom on the hatch end beams. In such cases an addendum to the Grain Loading Booklet should be approved and dispensation issued by the vessel’s RO on behalf of Cayman Islands Shipping Registry, as per our ‘Instructions to ROs’.

Application: 1 January 2026

6. AMENDMENTS TO THE ESP CODE

Adopted modifications to the 2019 amendments so that both administrations and recognized organizations may be involved with the approval and auditing of firms engaged in thickness measurements of hull structures on oil tankers.

Application: 1 January 2026

7. AMENDMENTS TO THE LSA CODE

Lifejackets

Amendments address in-water performance of SOLAS life jackets, i.e. to specify the criteria for recognizing a successful turn of a test subject.

Single fall and hook systems with on-load release capabilities

The Life-Saving Appliances (LSA) Code, paragraph 4.4.7.6.8, provides measures to prevent the accidental release of the fall and hook system during the recovery of lifeboats and rescue boats. Lifeboats and rescue boats with single fall and hook systems are currently exempted from such measures. MSC 108 adopted amendments to clarify the requirements for lifeboats and rescue boats fitted with single fall and hook systems not being able to release with a load on the hook when not fully waterborne.

Lowering speed of survival craft for cargo ships

Amendments include a minimum lowering speed calculated as a function of height, but not less than 1.0 m/s, and to define a maximum lowering speed of 1.3 m/s. Administrations may accept other maximum lowering speeds on a case-by-case basis, subject to certain safeguards being met.

Application: Ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026.

8. AMENDMENTS TO THE FSS CODE

The FSS Code was amended to detail the specification of the fixed water-based fire-extinguishing system now required for Ro-Ro weather decks (SOLAS Chapter II-2 Reg.20).

Application: Ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026.

9. AMENDMENTS TO THE STCW CODE

Amendments to the STCW Code on competency to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment, including sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH).

Adopted the new STCW-F Code, containing training, certification and watchkeeping provisions for fishing vessel personnel.

Application: 1 January 2026