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Passenger Ship Windows

Notice to ship owners, managers, Masters, Approved Nautical Inspectors, Recognised Organisations and surveyors

1. Purpose

1.1. This Information Notice (IN) provides guidance on the protection of windows and side scuttles in passenger ships and the safety of passengers when situated in areas close to windows and side scuttles during bad weather.

1.2. Recent casualty investigations involving passenger ships have highlighted additional considerations relating to windows, side scuttles and passenger safety in adverse weather. This Notice draws attention to those findings and to emerging good practice and expands upon the existing risk-based guidance without introducing new statutory requirements.

1.3. Previous investigations have further demonstrated that failure of bridge front windows in heavy weather may result in a rapid degradation of navigational capability and loss of effective command, with consequential safety risks to passengers and crew.

2. Application

2.1. This Notice applies to all Bahamian passenger ships of 500 gross tonnage and above, other than passenger High Speed Craft.

3. Windows and side scuttles

3.1. As defined in the International Convention on Load Lines, 1966, as modified by the Protocol of 1988, as amended (Load Lines Convention):

i. ***windows*** are "*...rectangular openings generally, having a radius at each corner relative to the window size and round or oval openings with an area exceeding 0.16m²*".

ii. ***side scuttles*** are "*...round or oval openings with an area not exceeding 0.16m². Round or oval openings having area exceeding 0.16m² shall be treated as windows*".

4. Carriage of portable storm covers, deadlights and spare glazing

4.1. The Company[1] should carry out an operational risk assessment to determine whether additional protection or replacement arrangements are required for windows and side scuttles. The assessment should take account of:

i. the ship's operating area, voyage duration and expected weather and sea conditions;
ii. the position and exposure of windows and side scuttles;
iii. the availability of permanently fitted deadlights, storm covers or other protective arrangements;
iv. the practicability of effecting temporary repairs at sea;
v. the availability and delivery time of replacement glazing; and
vi. any operating limitations or other measures available to reduce exposure.

4.2. In carrying out the assessment required by paragraph 4.1, the Company should consider whether the ship's intended operation may expose windows or side scuttles to severe weather or breaking seas, including operation in exposed sea areas or in beam or quartering seas. Consideration should be given to operational measures such as alteration of course or speed, avoidance of exposed areas and restriction of access to spaces adjacent to vulnerable glazing.

4.3. Where the assessment identifies a need for additional protection, suitable portable deadlights, storm covers or other equivalent protective arrangements should be carried and maintained readily available for use. Deadlights will normally be applicable to side scuttles and storm covers to windows.

4.4. The Company should establish a risk-based policy for the carriage of spare glazing. The number and type of spare panes carried should take account of:

i. the number, type, size and location of external windows and side scuttles;
ii. the availability of deadlights, storm covers or equivalent protective arrangements;
iii. the availability of suitable materials and procedures for temporary repair;
iv. the ship's trading pattern and voyage duration; and
v. the availability and delivery time of replacement glazing.

4.5. As a guide, spare glazing should be carried for windows and side scuttles identified by the assessment as particularly vulnerable or for which an effective temporary closure cannot readily be fitted. A fixed minimum number of spare panes for every size of

[1] The 'Company' is the entity responsible for the operation and management of the ship in accordance with the ISM Code (SOLAS Chapter IX), as applied under the Merchant Shipping Act, 2021. Where the ISM Code is not applicable, the Company is the entity recorded as responsible for the operation of the ship in accordance with regulation 5(3)(d) of the Merchant Shipping (Registration) Regulations, 2026.

window or side scuttle is not required where the Company can demonstrate that suitable alternative arrangements are available.

4.6. Sister ships operating regular services of less than 24 hours' duration may maintain common stocks of spare glazing at a mutually shared port, provided that appropriate temporary repair arrangements are carried on each ship.

4.7. Notwithstanding paragraph 4.5, where only one window of a particular size or type is identified by the risk assessment as being particularly vulnerable, only one spare pane need be carried for that window.

4.8. Sufficient materials and equipment shall be available on board to enable an effective temporary repair or protective closure to be fitted following failure of a window or side scuttle. The temporary arrangement shall provide an appropriate degree of strength and watertightness or weathertightness, as applicable. Permanent repair or replacement shall be completed at the earliest practicable opportunity and within any period specified by the Recognised Organisation or the BMA. The fitting of an accepted temporary arrangement does not, by itself, require replacement of the glazing before departure from the next port.

5. Breaking wave considerations

5.1. Windows and side scuttles shall comply with the applicable statutory, classification and approved design requirements. This section does not introduce additional structural design loads or require the Company to repeat structural calculations undertaken during design approval. The following guidance relates to operational assessment and the protection of passengers in service.

5.2. Casualty investigations have shown that windows and side scuttles which fully comply with existing international and classification society requirements may nevertheless be damaged by breaking waves in certain operating conditions.

5.3. Such effects may be exacerbated by green water on deck, delayed water clearing on the foredeck, or repeated head-sea exposure, particularly on passenger ships with forward-located bridges or accommodation.

5.4. The Company is therefore encouraged to consider, as part of its existing risk assessment processes, whether window and side-scuttle arrangements may be vulnerable to such effects, taking account of vessel heading, speed, wave characteristics and trading area. In this context, reliance on speed reduction alone may be insufficient, and early alteration of course to reduce head-sea exposure may merit consideration.

6. Protection of passengers in common areas close to windows and side scuttles in bad weather

6.1. In recent years, there have been several incidents that have resulted in serious injuries to passengers owing to failure of windows in bad weather.

6.2. The Company is expected, as part of its existing safety management and risk assessment processes, to consider operational safeguards in relation to seating and communal areas in way of windows and side scuttles.

6.3. The Company is also encouraged to review the arrangements for managing passenger access to spaces adjacent to windows and other glazed areas during adverse weather. Investigation reports have shown that passenger injuries in heavy weather are often associated with vessel motion and the interaction of passengers with furniture, fittings and glazed surfaces. The risk of injury may increase significantly where glazing fails or is compromised, resulting in sudden water ingress or structural damage to internal spaces.

6.4. Such reviews may include consideration of temporary restrictions on access to certain spaces, relocation of passengers, securing or removal of mobile or lightweight furniture, and provision of suitable handholds, as appropriate.

7. Operational awareness

7.1. Experience from recent incidents suggests that enhanced awareness of vessel motion and sea conditions can assist decision-making in adverse weather. Operators may also wish to consider the limitations and uncertainty inherent in meteorological forecasts, including the potential for rapid intensification of weather systems.

7.2. While not required by international Conventions, the Company may find it beneficial to make use of available motion or sea-state information when assessing risk to passengers and ship structure.

7.3. Prolonged exposure to adverse weather may increase bridge team workload and fatigue, and this factor may warrant consideration within existing safety management arrangements.

8. Queries

8.1. Any queries on this Notice may be addressed to tech@bahamasmaritime.com or any BMA office.

Revision History

Version	Description of Revision
1.0	First Issue
1.1	Updated branding
1.2	Periodic review
2.0	Major revision to incorporate guidance arising from recent passenger ship casualty investigations, including protection and replacement arrangements for windows and side scuttles, breaking-wave effects, passenger safety in adverse weather, and emerging good practice.