

---

## Hatches, Lifting Appliances and Anchor Handling Winches

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

---

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Notice is provided by the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) to describe the requirements for the design, construction, installation, inspection, testing, certification and maintenance of hatches, lifting plant and anchor handling winches<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2. The Bahamas requirements for the testing, certification and maintenance of ship's hatches and lifting plant on Bahamian ships are as provided in the [Merchant Shipping \(Hatches and Lifting Plant\) Regulations 1988, as amended](#)<sup>2</sup> ('the Bahamas Regulations').
- 1.3. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted Resolution [MSC.532\(107\)](#) on 08 June 2023, which amended the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974, as amended (SOLAS), including *inter alia* the addition of a new Regulation 3-13 on lifting appliances and anchor handling winches in Chapter II-1 of the Convention (SOLAS Chapter II-1). The amendments enter into force on **01 January 2026**.
- 1.4. This notice does not address other requirements that may be applicable to lifting appliances on board ships through Rules of Classification, regional or national legislation of the State(s) in whose jurisdiction a ship may operate or other regulatory regimes affecting such equipment either directly or indirectly.

### 2. Application

- 2.1. This Notice applies to all Bahamian ships registered under the Merchant Shipping Act.
- 2.2. The Bahamas regulations place obligations on the 'employer'. The 'employer' is considered the entity that employs the master - in most cases, this will be the same as

---

<sup>1</sup> Anchor handling winch means any winch for the purpose of deploying, recovering and repositioning anchors and mooring lines in subsea operations

<sup>2</sup>

<https://mf.bahamasmaritime.net/SharedLinks.aspx?accesskey=10f8c62f49fdc27bad156b7e43723019dfb69e2ffee2e9d71f74dd170bc2b862&VaultGUID=8A7ABFCE-CCD2-49D8-9190-B5F8650E5B38>

the 'Company'<sup>3</sup> for the purposes of the ISM Code. If the employer and the Company are different entities, it should be noted that the obligations in the Bahamas Regulations are on the employer and any reference to the Company in this Notice should be read as reference to the employer.

### 3. Definitions

- 3.1. The terms used in the Bahamas regulations are defined in Regulation 2 of the Merchant Shipping (Hatches and Lifting Plant) Regulations 1988, as amended.
- 3.2. The terms used in the SOLAS Regulation are defined in Regulation 2 of SOLAS Chapter II-1, as amended.
- 3.3. There is some overlap between the definitions of "lifting appliance", "lifting plant", "lifting gear" and "loose gear". For the purposes of this Notice:
  - i. **Lifting appliances** refers to any ship's stationary or mobile appliance (and every part thereof, including attachments used for anchoring, fixing, or supporting that appliance but not including vehicle coupling and vehicle securing arrangements) which is used on a ship for the purposes of suspending, raising, or lowering loads or moving them from one position to another while suspended. It also includes ship's lift trucks and similar vehicles. Additionally, it encompasses all load-handling ship's equipment used for:
    - Cargo loading, transfer, or discharge;
    - Raising and lowering hold hatch covers or movable bulkheads, except where done by hydraulic or mechanical jacks;
    - Engine-room cranes independent of type;
    - Stores cranes independent of type;
    - Hose handling cranes independent of type;
    - Launch and recovery of tender boats, work boats, overboard hanging arrangements, suspended work platforms and any and all similar applications;
    - Personnel handling cranes.

However, lifting appliances do not include:

- Pipes, Ladders and gangways including winches serving these applications;

---

<sup>3</sup> The 'Company' is the entity responsible for the management of the ship in accordance with the ISM Code. For ships which the ISM Code is not applicable, the Company is the Managing Owner in accordance with section 52 of the Merchant Shipping Act (Ch.268)

- Screw, belt, bucket, or other conveyor systems used for the continuous movement of cargo or people, but it does include the lifting appliances used to suspend, raise, lower, or move any of these items or assemblies thereof;
  - Survival craft or rescue boat launching and recovery appliances or arrangements;
  - Pilot hoists;
  - Personnel elevators or cargo lifts;
  - Personnel fall arresters and lifeboat fall preventer devices (FPD).
- ii. **Lifting gear / Loose gear** refers to any and all gear or article of ship's equipment by means of which a load can be attached to a lifting appliance or an anchor handling winch, but which does not form an integral part of that appliance or the load. It does not include pallets, one-trip slings, pre-slung cargo slings, and freight containers.
- iii. **Lifting plant** means all lifting appliances and lifting gear.
- iv. **Survey** means the survey of the ship's Safety Construction, Passenger Ship Safety Certificate (PSSC) or other form of certification issued to the ship to certify compliance with SOLAS Chapter II-1;
- v. **Repairs, modifications or alterations of a major character** are those which:
- change the safe working load (SWL) of the lifting appliance; or
  - affect the strength, stability or service life of the lifting appliance; or
  - affect the primary load bearing structure of the lifting appliance; or
  - modify the functionality of the lifting appliance or any part thereof which may affect its strength or safety or structural integrity.
- vi. **Anchor Handling Winch** means any winch for the purpose of deploying, recovering and repositioning anchors and mooring lines in subsea operations. It does not include ship's anchoring and mooring equipment, such as anchor windlasses, anchor winches, anchor capstans or other arrangements provided for the purpose of anchoring a ship.
- vii. **Register of Lifting Appliances and Cargo Handling Gear** (The Register) means the lifting plant records maintained on board a ship in the format specified in Appendix 3 of MSC.1/Circ.1663. The Register may be maintained in either paper or electronic form and does not require approval. The Register shall remain on board at all times.

#### **4. Compliance requirements**

- 4.1. The Bahamas Regulations apply to all Bahamian ships except for:
  - i. fishing vessels;
  - ii. pleasure craft (i.e. private yachts);
  - iii. offshore installations whilst on or within 500 metres of their permanent working location; or
  - iv. ships on which there is for the time being no Master, crew or watchman (i.e. laid up).
- 4.2. Regulation 3-13 of SOLAS Chapter II-1 ('the SOLAS Regulation') enters into force on 01 January 2026 in respect of lifting appliances and anchor handling winches, and loose gear used with them.
- 4.3. The Bahamas Regulations will continue to apply to **all lifting plant** including those with a SWL below 1000kg.
- 4.4. **The SOLAS Regulation therefore applies to lifting appliances with a SWL of 1000 kg and above** except for:
  - i. lifting appliances on ships certified as MODUs<sup>4</sup>;
  - ii. lifting appliances used on offshore construction ships, such as pipe/cable laying/repair or offshore installation vessels, including ships for decommissioning work, which comply with standards acceptable to the BMA<sup>5</sup>;
  - iii. integrated mechanical equipment for opening and closing hold hatch covers; and
  - iv. life-saving launching appliances complying with the International Life-Saving Appliance (LSA) Code.
- 4.5. Operations and Maintenance Manuals for all lifting appliances referenced in 4.4 above shall be available on board as outlined in paragraph 3 of MSC.1/Circ.1663.
- 4.6. **Alternative compliance for Mobile Offshore Units/Mobile Offshore Drilling Units (MODU)<sup>6</sup>**
  - 4.6.1. Where a ship has dual MODU and SOLAS certification in respect of lifting appliances, the MODU Code requirements shall apply. This excludes anchor handling winches

---

<sup>5</sup> In general, the MS (Hatches and Lifting Plant) Regulations 1988 will continue to apply, however the BMA may consider acceptance of the equivalent standards, including those of the State(s) in whose waters the ship is operating.

<sup>6</sup> Ships certified as MODUs are those subject to the MODU Code and which carry a MODU Code Certificate on board issued by the BMA or one of its Recognised Organisations, including authorised electronic versions of the Certificate available on board. Chapter 12 of the MODU Code applies to these units in respect of lifting equipment.

which, if fitted, are subject to the survey, testing and examination regime required by regulation 3-13 of SOLAS Chapter II-1.

- 4.6.2. In some areas, a stationary FPSO/FSO unit may be certificated to SOLAS rather than MODU Code but for all intents and purposes such units operate in the manner consistent with a regular MODU certificated unit. The BMA may consider permitting such units, after 01 January 2026, to continue to operate with lifting appliances being examined and tested based on the existing Bahamas regulations, independent of the SWL, as an equivalent to SOLAS.
- 4.6.3. In such cases, the Company should prepare and apply to the BMA, via the Recognised Organisation as per Marine Notice 05, for acceptance of the equivalent method of compliance in lieu of SOLAS requirements.
- 4.6.4. The application shall outline the details of maintenance, testing and examination requirements applied to lifting appliances on board in lieu of SOLAS provisions. Where accepted, the alternative equivalent compliance provisions shall apply to all lifting appliances on board independent of SWL.
- 4.6.5. Alternative compliance should not be based on provisions of ILO152.
- 4.7. All Bahamian ships already comply with the Bahamas regulations, and all lifting plant should already be compliant with those requirements. The requirements of the Bahamas Regulations will remain in force and fully applicable to all lifting plant after 01 January 2026 - see Section 8 below for further details.
- 4.8. The new SOLAS Regulation does not directly address hatches. The Bahamas Regulations will continue to apply to hatches as described in Section 6 of this Notice.
- 4.9. The current Bahamas Regulations do not address anchor handling winches. The SOLAS Regulation will apply to anchor handling winches from 01 January 2026, as described in Section 7 of this Notice.
- 4.10. ***International Labour Organization Convention 152 (ILO152)***
  - 4.10.1. The Bahamas is not a signatory to ILO Convention 152; however, the Bahamas Regulations give effect to its requirements. The BMA welcomes and encourages certification under the provisions of this instrument.
  - 4.10.2. Bahamas Recognised Organisations are authorised to issue Statements of Compliance with ILO152 – see section 3.3 of the Bahamas National Requirements.

- 4.10.3. Where a ship undergoes survey and certification of any part of the on board lifting plant under ILO152 provisions, the Bahamas Regulations and SOLAS Regulation will continue to apply concurrently.

## **5. Survey and Load Testing Periodicity**

- 5.1. Survey of lifting appliances and anchor handling winches shall be completed as part of the ship's Safety Construction/Passenger Ship Safety Certificate survey and at the periods specified in [A.1186\(33\) Survey Guidelines under the Harmonized System of Survey and Certification](#), as amended.
- 5.2. There are no requirements for any dedicated periodical 'lifting appliances survey'. All survey activities in respect of compliance with the requirements of the SOLAS Regulation are included in the scope of the ship's Safety Construction/Passenger Ship Safety Certificate survey.
- 5.3. No separate survey is required to be completed on or immediately after 01 January 2026. However, the dates of the last load test and annual thorough examination of lifting appliances shall not exceed the prescribed limits in order to maintain full compliance with the SOLAS Regulation.
- 5.4. The periodicity of the load testing required under Regulation 7(2) of the Merchant Shipping (Hatches and Lifting Plant) Regulations 1988 and Regulation 3-13.2.4 of SOLAS Chapter II-1<sup>7</sup> shall not exceed 5 years.
- 5.5. Unless the prescribed periodicity has been exceeded, the load test and the annual thorough examination, as referenced in para.3.2 of MSC.1/Circ.1663, are not required to be performed at the time of a scheduled Safety Construction/Passenger Ship Safety Certificate survey.

## **6. Hatches**

- 6.1. Regulation 4 of the Bahamas regulations requires every Company, Master and any person carrying out on board duties in relation to hatch covering to take full account of the principles and guidance in Chapter 16<sup>8</sup> of the [United Kingdom Code of Safe Working Practice for Merchant Seafarers](#) when operating or maintaining hatch covering.

<sup>7</sup> see paragraphs 3.2.1.2 and 3.2.1.4 of MSC.1/Circ.1663

<sup>8</sup> The reference in the regulations is to Chapter 18 of the version of the Code that existed at the time the regulations were drafted; this is equivalent to Chapter 16 of the current version



- 6.2. The Company and Master shall ensure that any hatch covering<sup>9</sup> used on a ship is of sound construction and material, of adequate strength for the purpose for which it is used, free from patent defect and properly maintained.
- 6.3. The Master shall ensure that
- i. a hatch covering is not used unless it can be removed and replaced, whether manually or with mechanical power, without endangering any person; and
  - ii. information showing the correct replacement position is clearly marked, except in so far as hatch coverings are interchangeable or incapable of being incorrectly replaced.
- 6.4. The Master shall ensure that a hatch is not used unless the hatch covering has been completely removed, or if not completely removed is properly secured.
- 6.5. Except in the event of an emergency endangering health or safety, no person shall operate a hatch covering which is power-operated or a ship's ramp or a retractable car deck, unless authorised to do so by a responsible ship's officer.

## **7. Anchor handling winches**

- 7.1. Anchor handling winches installed on or after 01 January 2026<sup>10</sup> shall be designed, constructed, installed and tested, based on circular [MSC.1/Circ.1662 Guidelines for anchor handling winches](#).
- 7.2. Anchor handling winches installed before 01 January 2026 shall be tested and thoroughly examined, based on provisions outlined in MSC.1/Circ.1662, no later than the date of the first renewal survey on or after 01 January 2026.
- 7.3. Anchor handling winches, regardless of installation date, and all loose gear utilised with anchor handling winches, shall be operationally tested, thoroughly examined, inspected, operated and maintained, based on MSC.1/Circ.1662 and [MSC.1/Circ.1663 Guidelines for Lifting Appliances](#).

## **8. Lifting Plant**

### **8.1. General**

- 8.1.1. The requirements for testing and thorough examination as outlined in Regulations 7-(1) and 8 of MS (Hatches and Lifting Plant) Regulations 1988 apply to **all** lifting plant on

---

<sup>9</sup> includes hatch covers, beams and attached fixtures and fittings

<sup>10</sup> See definition in Annex 2

board every Bahamian ship independent of SOLAS Regulation applicability. See 9.4 below.

- 8.1.2. Regulation 5 of the Bahamas Regulations require every Company, Master or any person carrying out on board duties in relation to lifting plant to take full account of the principles and guidance in Chapter 19<sup>11</sup> of the [United Kingdom Code of Safe Working Practice for Merchant Seafarers](#).
- 8.1.3. Where any part of lifting plant has been duly surveyed and tested to the provisions of Regulations 3-13.2 or 3-13.3 of Chapter II-1 of SOLAS, it shall be assumed the same covers the requirements of the Bahamas regulations. No separate survey, testing or record keeping pursuant to the Bahamas Regulations is required in such cases for those parts of lifting plant.

## **9. Design, construction and installation**

### **9.1. General**

- 9.1.1. The Company and Master shall ensure that any ship's lifting plant is of good design, of sound construction and material, of adequate strength for the purpose for which it is used, free from patent defect, properly installed or assembled and properly maintained.
- 9.1.2. The Master shall ensure that any pallet or similar piece of equipment for supporting loads or lifting attachment which forms an integral part of the load or one-trip sling or preslung cargo sling is not used on a ship unless it is of good construction, of adequate strength for the purpose for which it is used and free from patent defect.
- 9.1.3. All lifting appliances, shall be designed, constructed and installed in accordance with the rules of a Bahamas Recognised Organisation, or alternative standards acceptable to the Recognised Organisation that provide an equivalent level of safety.
- 9.1.4. The Company and Master shall ensure that no lifting plant is used after manufacture or installation without first being suitably tested by a competent person. See 9.3 below.

### **9.2. Operation and use of lifting plant**

- 9.2.1. The Company and Master shall ensure that lifting plant is not used other than in a safe and proper manner.

---

<sup>11</sup> The reference in the regulations is to Chapter 17 of the version of the Code that existed at the time the regulations were drafted; this is equivalent to Chapter 19 of the current version



- 9.2.2. The Company and the Master shall ensure that, except to carry out a load test, the lifting plant is not loaded in excess of its SWL.
- 9.2.3. No person shall operate any lifting appliances unless they are fully trained, familiar with the operating procedures and competent<sup>12</sup> to do so and they have been duly authorised by a responsible ship's officer. The ship's Master and responsible officer must ensure all operators have the necessary practical competence and knowledge of safe lifting practices, emergency response procedures, and equipment limitations.

**9.3. Load testing**

- 9.3.1. The Company and the Master shall ensure that a lifting appliance is not used unless it has been suitably tested by a competent person within the preceding five years, or after any repair or modification which is likely to alter the SWL or affect the lifting plant's strength or stability.
- 9.3.2. All lifting appliances shall be load tested and thoroughly examined after installation and before being taken into use for the first time and after repairs, modifications or alterations of major character to the satisfaction of the Recognised Organisation that classes the ship.
- 9.3.3. For load testing of lifting appliances intended for use while the ship is in port or in sheltered waters, the test load, as set out in Table 1 below, should be established using the SWL.

SWL of the lifting appliance, tonnes	Test load, tonnes
SWL ≤ 20 t	1.25 x SWL
SWL 20 t to ≤ 50 t	SWL + 5 t
SWL > 50 t	1.10 x SWL

*Table 1 – Lifting appliance minimum test loads*

- 9.3.4. For lifting appliances intended for open-sea operations, the test loads should take into account the applicable dynamic loads. The additional dynamic load factor shall be determined on the basis of the rules and standards of the Recognised Organisation that classes the ship.
- 9.3.5. Where the SWL of the lifting appliances is undocumented and design information is not available, e.g. for lifting appliances which are installed on board before 1 January 2026 and the manufacturer no longer exists, the test load should be calculated using Table 1 above based on the SWL demonstrated through the historic operation of such lifting appliances and after a review and assessment conducted by the Company in

<sup>12</sup> Please refer to BMA Marine Notice 89

cooperation with and to satisfaction of the Recognised Organisation that classes the ship. The BMA does not intend to establish any separate criteria for lifting appliances with undocumented SWL.

- 9.3.6. Load testing shall be always performed by duly trained and experienced competent personnel. In case of lifting appliances referenced in paragraph 4.4 the load testing shall be witnessed by a surveyor of the Recognised Organisation that classes the ship.
- 9.3.7. All lifting gear referenced in paragraph 3.3.ii, when purchased by the Company, should be provided with a manufacturer's test certificate. Manufacturer's load testing based on national or regional requirements may be accepted provided that the test load is not less than that outlined in paragraph 9.3.3. Such equipment does not require separate load testing before the first use, unless this is required under the Company's safety management system.
- 9.3.8. Where purchased lifting gear has been delivered on board without a manufacturer's test certificate, or where the test certificate does not satisfy the criteria outlined in paragraph 9.3.7, initial load testing shall be completed before the first use by a competent person either on board, or at suitable shore facilities, to the satisfaction of the Master.
- 9.3.9. Lifting gear provided with a manufacturer's test certificate may be used until the certificate expires, or 5 years from the date of testing on the certificate, whichever is sooner, subject to annual examination as described in paragraph 9.4. Procedures relating to the timely replacement or load testing shall be included in the safety management system.

#### 9.4. ***Periodical testing and thorough examination***

- 9.4.1. The Company and the Master shall ensure that any lifting plant is not used unless it has been thoroughly examined by a competent person:
  - i. at least once in the preceding 12-month period; and
  - ii. following a load test.
- 9.4.2. All lifting appliances with a SWL of 1000kg and above regardless of installation date, and all loose gear utilised with any lifting appliances, shall be operationally tested and thoroughly examined based on MSC.1/Circ.1663.
- 9.4.3. In view of the provisions outlined in 8.1.1 above, the BMA recommends utilising the guidelines outlined in MSC.1/Circ.1663 for testing and examination of lifting appliances with a SWL below 1000kg.

### 9.5. ***Maintenance***

- 9.5.1. Regular preventive maintenance is essential to ensure lifting appliances remain in sound working condition.
- 9.5.2. Maintenance schedules should be based on manufacturer recommendations and operational usage, and must include, amongst others, lubrication, adjustment of moving parts, inspection of structural integrity, and calibration of control systems as applicable. Procedures relating to the maintenance of lifting plant should be included in the safety management system, and a responsible person should authenticate records. Guidelines with regard to the maintenance manual and its contents are contained in MSC.1/Circ.1663.

### 9.6. ***Safe Working Load (SWL)***

- 9.6.1. The Company and the Master shall ensure that each lifting appliance and lifting gear, including loose gear, is clearly and legibly marked with its SWL and a means of identification.
- 9.6.2. The Company and the Master shall ensure that any crane or derrick that is carried on the ship and whose SWL varies with its arm, boom or jib operating lift angle is fitted with an accurate indicator, clearly visible to the driver, showing the lift angle of the load lifting attachment at any time and the SWL corresponding to that lift angle.
- 9.6.3. In case of derricks operating in union purchase mode, the SWL limitation dependant on the boom swing and lift angles shall be available and taken into account when planning lifting operations by the responsible officer on board.
- 9.6.4. The Company and the Master shall ensure that each item of loose/lifting gear which weighs a significant proportion of the SWL of any lifting appliance with which it is intended to be used is, in addition to being marked with its SWL, clearly marked with its weight.
- 9.6.5. All lifting appliances shall be provided with the current documentary evidence for the SWL including the latest load testing report.

### 9.7. ***Documentation***

- 9.7.1. The load test certificate or report shall be provided on board upon completion of load testing and should be attached to the Register of the ship's lifting appliances and cargo handling gear.

- 9.7.2. The current documentary evidence of the SWL, such as load test certificates or reports, should be retained onboard at all times for all lifting plant and anchor handling winches, as applicable.
- 9.7.3. Records of thorough examination and load testing shall be maintained in the Register and should be available on board at all times. Similarly, records of thorough examination and load testing shall be maintained on board for all anchor handling winches.
- 9.7.4. Results of load testing and thorough examination shall be documented in the format of a Certificate as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to MSC.1/Circ.1663.

## **10. Inoperative lifting appliances, anchor handling winches and defective lifting gear items**

- 10.1. Except when an accident occurs or a defect is discovered, while all reasonable steps shall be taken to maintain lifting appliances and anchor handling winches in working order, malfunctions of that equipment shall not be assumed as making the ship unseaworthy or as a reason for delaying the ship in ports, provided that action has been taken by the Master to take the inoperative lifting appliance or anchor handling winch into account in planning and executing a safe voyage.
- 10.2. Any part of the lifting appliances on board found to be defective, damaged, or unsafe must be immediately removed from service, clearly tagged or quarantined, and not used until it is repaired, re-tested, and re-certificated.
- 10.3. Any worn or damaged lifting gear shall be immediately removed from service, indelibly marked and correctly disposed of at the earliest opportunity. The replacement lifting gear shall be of a similar or equivalent design, fully tested and certificated and of the same SWL. The BMA discourages repairs to worn or damaged lifting gear, but where such repairs are unavoidable, they shall only be undertaken by a competent person based on the manufacturer's repair procedures or other standards acceptable to the Recognised Organisation that classes the ship. Any repairs to lifting gear used on lifting appliances with SWL of over 1000kg shall be verified by the Recognised Organisation.
- 10.4. **SOLAS certificated ships**
  - 10.4.1. For all lifting appliances with a SWL of 1000kg and above and anchor handling winches, any defects affecting the SWL or making the equipment inoperable shall be reported to the Recognised Organisation that classes the ship and a temporary exemption sought as per BMA Marine Notice 8.

- 10.4.2. Whilst out of service, the relevant actions for inoperative equipment outlined under section 5 of MSC.1/Circ. 1663 or MSC.1/Circ. 1662, as appropriate, shall be taken into account to mitigate risks posed. Minor defects not affecting the SWL or operational status of the equipment are not required to be reported.

## 11. Queries

Any enquiries on this Notice may be addressed to [tech@bahamasmaritime.com](mailto:tech@bahamasmaritime.com) or any BMA office.

[illegible]