

Servicing of inflatable lifesaving appliances

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

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Marine Notice (MN) provides instructions relating to the servicing of inflatable liferafts, inflated rescue boats, inflatable lifejackets and hydrostatic release units.
- 1.2. For Marine Evacuation Systems (MES), please refer to [Marine Notice 84](#).

2. Application

- 2.1. This Notice applies to all ships registered in The Bahamas fitted with inflatable liferafts, inflated rescue boats, inflatable lifejackets and hydrostatic release units.

3. Service intervals and extensions

- 3.1. Regulation 20 of Chapter III of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974, as amended (SOLAS) requires that inflatable liferafts, inflatable lifejackets, inflated rescue boats and hydrostatic release units (other than disposable hydrostatic release units) be serviced at intervals not exceeding 12 months.
- 3.2. The Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) may extend the service period by up to 5 months if a ship is trading to ports where there are no approved service stations, in accordance with SOLAS Regulation III/20.8.1.1.
- 3.3. The BMA may allow an extension to the servicing interval in line with the relevant annual or periodical survey window, i.e. 12 months +/- 3 months, up to a maximum of 18 months from the last date of servicing, in accordance with International Maritime Organization (IMO) Circular MSC/Circ.955.
 - 3.3.1. In such instances where the latest servicing and previous servicing were done within the relevant annual or periodical survey windows and not completed within a 12-month calendar period, the Company¹ does not need to apply to the BMA via the

¹ The "Company" is the entity responsible for the management of the ship in accordance with the ISM Code. For ships to which the ISM Code is not applicable, the Company is the Managing Owner in accordance with Section 52 of the Merchant Shipping Act

Recognised Organisation (i.e. Class), for an extension. However, it is the responsibility of the Company to notify the Recognised Organisation, as the issuer of the ship's safety certificate(s), of their intention to conduct liferaft servicing within the time limit of the relevant annual or periodical survey windows, which may cause the period between two consecutive services to reach a maximum of 18 months.

- 3.3.2. The BMA recommends that the Company obtain written confirmation from the Recognised Organisation of the above notification and append it to the liferaft service certificate(s) to mitigate any potential PSC sanctions.
- 3.4. Where inflatable liferafts, inflatable lifejackets, inflated rescue boats and hydrostatic release units (other than disposable hydrostatic release units) are serviced outside the relevant annual or periodical survey window, and cannot be serviced within the 12-month period, the Company shall apply to the BMA, via the Recognised Organisation, for an extension.
- 3.5. The Recognised Organisation is to review the application and seek authorisation from the BMA for the extension.
- 3.6. When reviewing applications for extension to service intervals, Recognised Organisations must verify that the justification for the extension is reasonable in the circumstances.
- 3.7. In considering any extension, due regard shall be given to dated components which may expire during this extension period (e.g. food, water, seasickness tablets, etc.). Otherwise, extensions shall be in line with the specified SOLAS allowances.
- 3.8. The period of the extension shall be limited to that considered necessary to carry out the required servicing and/or survey completion, but in no case shall the extension be for more than 5 months.

4. “Extended Service Interval” Liferafts

- 4.1. Liferafts designed for an extended service period of up to 30 months and approved by the Administration of the country of manufacture are acceptable to the BMA, provided that the approval is verified by a Bahamas Recognised Organisation as being in accordance with [MSC.1/Circ.1328](#).
- 4.2. “Extended service interval” means a service interval in excess of 12 months. Therefore, the provisions of SOLAS Regulation III/20.8.1.1 do not apply.
- 4.3. Accordingly, the BMA will not approve requests for extension of the extended service interval, other than in circumstances of *force majeure*.

4.4. The Company should carefully plan servicing of liferafts with extended service intervals to ensure that the required service is completed within the 30-month service period.

4.5. *Periodic onboard inspection of "Extended Service Interval" Liferafts*

4.5.1. Onboard inspections of liferafts should only be undertaken by qualified persons who have been adequately trained and certificated by the liferaft manufacturer.

4.5.2. Onboard inspections of liferafts approved for extended service intervals should include inspection and control of the humidity around the liferaft and behind the protective barrier and control of the gas cylinder. The certified service personnel should have the required equipment and necessary tools to conclude the inspection.

4.5.3. Sufficient and accurate tools and measuring equipment should be provided for the execution of the annual onboard inspection as required by SOLAS regulation III/20.8.3.2 and should include the following elements:

- i. means capable of evaluating the humidity around the liferaft and behind its protective barrier;
- ii. means capable of detecting possible leakages of inflation gas from the gas cylinder; and
- iii. if relevant, provisions for the replacement of expired items in the liferaft's equipment in conjunction with the onboard inspection.

4.5.4. If the periodic onboard inspection reveals a loss of inflation gas, the liferaft should undergo a full service immediately. If excess humidity is present, the liferaft should be serviced and repacked within three months of the date of the onboard inspection.

4.6. *Extended service intervals for rafts over 10 years old*

4.6.1. Paragraph 4.1.1 of MSC.1/Circ.1328 permits extended servicing intervals for the first 10 years of a liferaft's service life after which servicing intervals are to be at the frequency required by SOLAS III/20.8.1.1 (i.e. every 12 months). The 10-year limitation may be extended by the Administration if justified.

4.6.2. Where the liferaft manufacturer can demonstrate to the BMA, by service experience, that ageing of liferaft fabric and pressure seals is within acceptable limits, liferafts may continue to be used up to 15 years' service life, subject to continued compliance with MSC.1/Circ.1328. The liferaft manufacturer is to provide relevant documentation to the BMA for review. A fee may be charged for review of such documentation.

4.6.3. Where it is proposed to use extended service interval liferafts beyond 15 years' service life, the BMA will consider applications from the liferaft manufacturer on a case-by-case basis. The liferaft manufacturer is to provide relevant documentation to the BMA for review. A fee may be charged for review of such documentation.

5. Queries

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

Revision History