

IN 1479 – Outcome of the seventh session of IMO’s sub-committee on ship systems and equipment (SSE) 2-6 March 2020

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1. Revision of the IMO Diving Code

While there were several issues of interest for IMCA members, IMCA’s key objective at this session was to initiate the revision and update of the IMO *Code of Safety for Diving Systems* (resolution A.831 (19)) and the *Guidelines and Specifications for Hyperbaric Evacuation Systems*, resolution A.692 (17)) under Agenda Item 14.

IMCA had hosted two workshops during 2019 to initiate the work to harmonize the existing IMO diving instruments with current industry best practices and achieve the reinstatement of the Code as the minimum standard for diving and hyperbaric evacuation safety systems, and collaborated closely with the delegations of the Bahamas and the Marshall Islands to submit a ‘roadmap document’ (SSE 7/14) proposing how the work should be progressed for consideration by SSE 7. IMCA also prepared an Information Paper (SSE 7/INF.2) outlining how an amended Diving Code would look if it were produced using the goal-based standards approach.

To support the papers and increase awareness amongst Member States of the need to update the IMO Diving Instruments, three diving industry experts delivered a lunchtime presentation to a busy plenary session. In addition, an informative display, comprising of a diving mannequin, video footage and graphic panels, was exhibited throughout the meeting.

SSE 7 overwhelmingly endorsed the establishment of an intersessional correspondence group to progress the work noting that:

1. IMO instruments are outdated for today’s diving systems and, in order to keep up with industry practices and standards, a comprehensive revision of the 1995 Diving Code was necessary.
2. New text needed to be developed to address areas where it has been identified that the existing Code is incomplete.
3. The relevant parts of the ‘Guidelines and Specifications for Hyperbaric Evacuation Systems’ in Resolution A.692(17)’ should be incorporated into the revised Code; and
4. An integral part of the revision work should consist in restructuring the existing material in line with the Goal-Based Standards (GBS) format as illustrated in SSE 7/INF.2.

IMCA’s Diving team will work intersessionally to develop a draft text for consideration by the 8th session of the SSE sub-committee when it meets in Q1 2021.

2. Requirements for on-board lifting appliances and anchor handling winches (OLAW)

IMCA Contact:



Margaret Fitzgerald
Head of Legal & Regulatory
Affairs

Committees:

[MPRA \(Marine Policy & Regulatory
Affairs\)](#)

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IMCA has been participating in this work over several sessions of the sub-committee and previously had been successful in securing an exemption from the new SOLAS amendments for lifting appliances on offshore construction ships (MSC 100/20, paragraph 9.13).

IMCA has been following the ongoing work of the correspondence group and was concerned to see that the draft new text in relation to loose gear proposed 5-yearly testing. Given that IMCA members could have hundreds of items of loose gear on-board their vessels at any one time, this requirement, if passed, would be unworkable.

IMCA participated in the working group which was established at SSE 7 and was instrumental in having the relevant paragraph deleted.

The working group was unable to complete its' work on Anchor Handling Winches and, since several areas of concern remain to be addressed, IMCA will continue to be involved in the correspondence group which will continue the work intersessionally in order to prepare a final text for consideration by SSE 8 in March 2021.

3. Development of guidelines for cold ironing of ships and consideration of amendments to SOLAS Chapters II-1 & II-2

This is an item which IMCA has been following given that several vessels, such as Heerema's Sleipnir, are already using or planning to use shore power when in port areas (see IMCA ESB 01-20).

The SSE sub-committee, recognising the global efforts to reduce air pollution from ships through the use of onshore power, had, at its' last session, established a correspondence group on the development of '*Guidelines on Safe Operation of Onshore Power Supply (OPS) Service in Port for Ships Engaged on International Voyages*'. It was acknowledged that as a first step, the work should focus on operational safety aspects of using shore power with the expectation that future work would involve the development of a uniform set of equipment standards.

At SSE 7 the sub-committee agreed draft Interim Guidelines which will be submitted to the sub-committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW) for consideration and advice in relation to human element and qualifications of personnel, and subsequently to MSC 103 in November 2020 for approval.

Entry into force

Members should be aware that most of the regulatory work taking place within the SSE sub-committee has an entry into force date of 1 January 2024, following the four-year cycle of entry into force for SOLAS amendments.

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