



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS, MARINE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Marine Notice No. 5 of 2004

Use of Smoke Helmet Type Breathing Apparatus

The International Maritime Organization Maritime Safety Committee issued Circular 1085 dated 13 June 2003 concerning smoke helmet type breathing apparatus.

MSC/Circ.1085 is annexed to this Marine Notice. This circular and other relevant circulars are available on the IMO website at www.imo.org.

The Maritime Safety Directorate fully endorses the comments of the Maritime Safety Committee and strongly recommends that the following action is taken on all Irish vessels:

- Smoke helmet type breathing apparatus (SHBA) should be removed from vessels and replaced with a self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) complying with the Council Directive 96/98/EC (as amended) on Marine Equipment and bearing the 'wheelmark' symbol.
- Additional spare cylinders of compressed air suitable for the SCBA should be provided to allow at least 2400 litres of free air.
- Replacement SCBA and cylinders should be compatible and interchangeable with any other existing SCBA fitted on board.
- Companies who operate their vessels in accordance with the International Safety Management (ISM) Code are reminded that the Code Section 1.2.3.2 requires that *"the Safety Management System should ensure that applicable codes, guidelines and standards recommended by the Organization, Administrations, classification societies and maritime industry organizations are taken into account"*.

Director General
Maritime Safety Directorate
Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources,
Leeson Lane,
Dublin 2.

10th February 2004

For information in relation to technical specification/type approval of radio equipment contact the Radio Surveyors +353 1 678 2363/2364/2365/2367.

For general enquiries please contact the Maritime Safety Division at +353-1-678 2360

Any enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to:

Maritime Safety Directorate, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2

Email: marine.notices@dcmnr.gov.ie

Or visit our website at: www.dcmnr.gov.ie



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MSC/Circ.1085
13 June 2003

USE OF SMOKE HELMET-TYPE BREATHING APPARATUS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-seventh session (28 May to 6 June 2003), having taken into account the fact that, with the entry into force of the revised SOLAS chapter II-2 on 1 July 2002, new ships may no longer be fitted with smoke-helmet type breathing apparatus and that ships built prior to the entry into force of the new requirements will still be able to carry this type of equipment, recognized that owners and operators who are still allowed to fit ships with smoke helmet-type breathing apparatus as part of the minimum fire-fighting equipment inventory will encounter the following problems:

- .1 the equipment is not easy to use and requires significant training and very few, if any, shore-based training centres continue to provide instruction in the use of this equipment; and
- .2 particular difficulties are experienced when co-ordinating simultaneous use of both self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and smoke helmets to form an effective fire-fighting party.

2 The Committee additionally recognized that, compared to an SCBA, smoke helmet-type breathing apparatus have the following operational drawbacks/risks:

- .1 toxic fumes and smoke could be introduced into the air supply if the bellows are not placed in a safe environment;
- .2 there is a large commitment on personnel resources if the equipment is to be used effectively. This situation is significantly exacerbated by reduced crew numbers;
- .3 there is a high risk that the air supply line may be damaged or trapped;
- .4 the equipment restricts freedom of movement since the entry and exit points must be the same;
- .5 the range of operation is limited by the length of hose; and
- .6 maintenance and procurement of spare parts is difficult.

3 Member Governments are invited to bring the above information on the problems associated with the use of smoke helmet-type breathing apparatus to the attention of shipowners, shipoperators, shipmasters and other interested parties of the shipping industry and to recommend that existing ships be fitted with additional SCBAs to replace, or make redundant, existing smoke helmet type breathing apparatus where these form part of the minimum equipment required.