

RESOLUTION A.680(17) adopted on 6 November 1991  
IMO GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT FOR THE SAFE OPERATION  
OF SHIPS AND FOR POLLUTION PREVENTION

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IMO GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT FOR THE SAFE OPERATION  
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THE ASSEMBLY,

RECALLING Article 15(j) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization concerning the functions of the Assembly in relation to regulations and guidelines concerning maritime safety and the prevention and control of marine pollution from ships,

RECALLING ALSO resolution A.596(15) by which it requested the Maritime Safety Committee to develop, as a matter of urgency, guidelines, wherever relevant, concerning shipboard and shore-based management and its decision to include in the work programme of the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee an item on shipboard and shore-based management for the safe operation of ships and for the prevention of marine pollution, respectively,

NOTING resolution A.441(XI) by which it invited every State to take the necessary steps to ensure that the owner of a ship which flies the flag of that State provides such State with the current information necessary to enable it to identify and contact the person contracted or otherwise entrusted by the owner to discharge his responsibilities for that ship in regard to matters relating to maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment,

NOTING ALSO resolution A.443(XI) by which it invited Governments to take the necessary steps to safeguard the shipmaster in the proper discharge of his responsibilities in regard to maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment,

RECOGNIZING the need for appropriate organization of management to enable it to respond to the need of those on board ships to achieve and maintain high standards of safety and environmental protection,

RECOGNIZING ALSO that the most important means of preventing maritime casualties and pollution of the sea from ships is to design, construct, equip and maintain ships and to operate them with properly trained crews in compliance with international conventions and standards relating to maritime safety and pollution prevention,

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NOTING FURTHER that, as requested, the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee have reviewed resolution A.647(16) in the light of experience gained in the application of the Guidelines annexed thereto,

HAVING CONSIDERED the recommendations made by the Maritime Safety Committee at its fifty-ninth session and by the Marine Environment Protection Committee at its thirty-first session,

1. ADOPTS the revised IMO Guidelines on Management for the Safe Operation of Ships and for Pollution Prevention, set out in the annex to the present resolution;
2. INVITES Governments to encourage those responsible for the management and operation of ships to take appropriate steps to develop, implement and assess safety and pollution prevention management in accordance with the above Guidelines;
3. REQUESTS the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee periodically to review these Guidelines and to consider any need for amendments in the light of experience gained;
4. REVOKES resolution A.647(16).

## ANNEX

### IMO GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT FOR THE SAFE OPERATION OF SHIPS AND FOR POLLUTION PREVENTION

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide those responsible for the operation of ships (hereinafter called the "Company") with a framework for the proper development, implementation and assessment of safety and pollution prevention management in accordance with good practice.

1.2 The objective is to ensure safety, to prevent human injury or loss of life, and to avoid damage to the environment, in particular, the marine environment, and to property.

1.3 Shipping is a varied industry. No two shipping companies are the same and ships operate under a wide range of different conditions. These Guidelines, therefore, are based on general principles and objectives so as to promote evolution of sound management and operating practices within the industry as a whole.

#### 2 APPLICATION

2.1 These Guidelines are intended for all companies operating ships and do not seek in any way to define or embrace detailed regulatory requirements, international or national. It is taken for granted that companies comply with such requirements.

2.2 These Guidelines are expressed in broad terms so that they can have a widespread application. Clearly, different levels of management, whether shore-based or at sea, will require varying levels of knowledge and awareness of the items outlined. Persons with particular responsibilities should have detailed and specialist knowledge of their specific tasks.

2.3 These Guidelines are in a recommendatory form only; however, efforts should be made to apply them to the extent possible and practicable.

#### 3 BASIC INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

3.1 The most important means of preventing maritime casualties and pollution of the sea from ships is to design, construct, equip and maintain ships and to operate them with properly trained crews in compliance with international conventions and standards relating to maritime safety and pollution prevention.

3.2 To promote this, a number of conventions and other instruments have been developed by IMO and other international organizations, such as:

- .1 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS);
- .2 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL);
- .3 International Convention on Load Lines;



- .4 Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREG);
- .5 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW);
- .6 ILO Convention 147 (Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention).

#### 4 MANAGEMENT

##### General

4.1 Safety, pollution prevention and efficiency are integral to good management. They can only be the result of structured, painstaking policy and a combination of the right skills, knowledge and experience. The direct involvement of decision-making management in these matters is vital, its attitude being reflected in Company policy and thus directly in the work of all the Company employees. The cornerstone of good management is commitment from the top.

4.2 It is the commitment, competence, attitudes and motivation of all individuals engaged in activities pertaining to safety and pollution prevention at all levels that determine the end result.

4.3 It should be recognized that on board the ship it is the master who has the overriding responsibility for the safe operation of the ship. It is, therefore, essential to appoint a master competent to command the ship, who is fully conversant with and dedicated to the maintenance of appropriate safety and environmental protection standards, and to ensure that he is given all the necessary support and authority to perform his duties properly and safely.

##### Safety and environmental policy

4.4 Individuals and organizations perform well if certain basic principles are adhered to. These principles are briefly outlined in the following:

- .1 the Company should establish a safety and environmental protection policy with the objectives of safe ship operation and the prevention of pollution. The policy should state these objectives and set out the means of achieving them, in broad terms, taking into account the relevant international conventions and national regulations;
- .2 the necessary resources and personnel should be provided for the implementation and functioning of the policy and the achievement of safe operation and pollution prevention; and
- .3 the policy should be clearly explained to all employees. Personnel throughout the Company need to understand the arrangements which have been made and to know which specific duties they have been authorized to carry out, as well as the level of performance expected. General and specific responsibilities within the Company should be defined explicitly. The arrangements under which the policy will work should be co-ordinated so as to ensure safe and effective operation.

4.5 In drawing up the policy, account should be taken of the following:

- .1 the need for concise guidance and instructions on safe operation and pollution prevention, including maintaining the condition of ships and equipment to conform with the provisions of relevant statutory and classification rules and regulations;
- .2 the need for good communication both within the ship and between the ship and management ashore;
- .3 the fact that competence, attitudes and motivation are decisive factors in safe operation and pollution prevention and that the performance of individuals is significantly influenced by the quality of the management systems; and
- .4 the fact that accidents can be prevented by proper planning and execution of operations.

4.6 The policy should be reviewed at regular intervals and amended when necessary to ensure that it remains effective. In refining the policy, the importance of discussions and co-operation with Administrations and organizations representing shipowners and seafarers should be recognized.

#### Designated person ashore

4.7 To ensure the safe operation of their ships and to provide a link between the company and those on board, every company should designate a person ashore having direct access to senior management and with the responsibility for monitoring the safety and pollution prevention aspects of the operation of their ships and to ensure that adequate resources and the appropriate shore-based support are provided.

#### Operations documentation

4.8 Guidance and instructions from the company to the master, officers and crew of their ships should be documented in a form which is left to the discretion of owners. A list of suggested subjects for documentation is given in appendix 1. This list is for guidance only and may be varied to take account of the circumstances of the particular ship or its operations. The documentation should also include a statement that it does not affect the master's authority to take such action and issue such orders, whether or not they are in accordance with its contents, that may be considered to be necessary for the safety of life, for the safety of the ship or the prevention of marine pollution. The designated person referred to in 4.7 should be identified in the appropriate places in the documentation.

#### Accident reporting

4.9 Accident reporting is essential in order that safe and pollution-free performance can be monitored effectively so that corrective action can be taken. The policy should cover the requirements for immediate accident reporting.

4.10 Accidents should be thoroughly investigated and discussed with the personnel involved with a view to avoiding recurrences. Certain accidents are required to be reported by national law and the policy should remind personnel of their obligations in this regard.

Suitably qualified seafarers

4.11 Each ship should be manned with qualified, medically fit and suitably experienced seafarers, in accordance with the relevant international and national requirements. In addition, the following items should be considered:

- .1 ships should be adequately manned for the trade in which they are engaged;
- .2 ship's personnel should have a proper knowledge of the technical aspects of the ship and its operation as necessary for the performance of their duties, and receive the necessary training for familiarization with the particular ship or equipment; and
- .3 ship's personnel should receive the relevant information on safety and pollution prevention in English or in the languages understood by them.

Other company responsibilities

4.12 The Company, being aware of the basic technical aspects of its ships and the trades in which they are engaged, should be prepared to respond to technical and operational needs. The Company has the responsibility to ensure that defects identified by the master are corrected and, where so required, to notify the Administration and classification societies as appropriate. The Company should fully recognize the implications of commercial decisions in terms of safe ship operation and pollution prevention.

5 MASTER

5.1 With regard to safety and environmental protection, the master has the responsibility on board a ship for:

- .1 implementing the safety and environmental policy of the Company on the basis of international conventions, codes and national legislation;
- .2 motivating the crew in the execution of that policy;
- .3 issuing appropriate orders and instructions in a clear and simple manner; and
- .4 reviewing the safety and pollution prevention procedures.

5.2 In matters of safety and pollution prevention, the master has the overriding authority and discretion to take whatever action he considers to be in the best interests of passengers, crew, ship and the marine environment.

5.3 The master has the responsibility to report to the Company such defects and other matters which could affect the safe operation of the ship or could present a risk of pollution, and which require the assistance of the Company to ensure that they are rectified.

## 6 CREW

Ship's personnel should comply with the safety and environmental policy of the Company as well as with the instructions and orders of the master in this regard. It is their duty to act responsibly to prevent any injury or damage and any pollution of the marine environment.

## 7 EMERGENCY DRILLS

Potential emergency situations likely to involve the ship should be analysed and actions to meet them should be practised at drills. A programme of such drills, including where necessary, drills additional to those required by SOLAS, should be carried out so as to develop and maintain a confident and proficient team on board to deal with emergencies.

## 8 FURTHER GUIDANCE

### General

8.1 Due regard should be paid to instructions and guidance issued by international and national bodies aimed at ensuring safe operation and pollution prevention. Documents related to these are, for example:

- .1 international conventions, recommendations and codes (see 8.2 and 8.3);
- .2 national legislation, codes and guidance generated by a ship's flag State and port States visited by the ship;
- .3 classification societies' rules and regulations (see 8.4); and
- .4 guidance issued by international and national industry organizations, insurance companies, etc., both in regard to general operational practices and to specific technical details (see 8.5).

### International conventions, recommendations and codes

8.2 Companies should be familiar with the basic contents of conventions such as those listed under section 3, a brief résumé of which is shown in appendix 2. Furthermore, companies should be acquainted with the relevant codes, recommendations and guidelines dealing with safety and environmental protection issued by IMO in the form of Assembly or MSC/MEPC resolutions or as MSC/MEPC circulars.

8.3 Companies should also be familiar with other conventions which are incorporated in and published as national legislation dealing with different aspects of safe ship operation and pollution prevention. Furthermore, Companies should be familiar with how the Government of the flag State has implemented international and national requirements.

### Classification societies

8.4 The various classification societies publish rules and regulations for the classification of ships. In addition, individual societies also produce guidance notes on various aspects of ship classification and statutory matters. The International Association of Classification Societies (IACS)



also produces and publishes numerous "Recommendations" which provide guidance on ship maintenance and operation, e.g., Care and survey of hatch covers, Fire prevention in machinery spaces in ships in service, Standards for ship equipment for mooring at single-point moorings. The societies also offer other services which may contribute to safe operation and pollution prevention.

#### Industry organizations

8.5 Important and helpful technical guides on efficient and safe ship operations and safe working routines, ship/shore checklists and navigational checklists have been issued by various industry organizations particularly the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF), the Society of International Gas Tanker and Terminal Operators Ltd. (SIGTTO) and the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO).

## APPENDIX 1

### Suggested subject-matter for operations documentation

#### A General

Shipboard organization  
Departmental responsibilities  
Reporting procedures  
Passenger control, when applicable  
Communication between ship and owner  
Inspections by masters and senior officers  
Provision and maintenance of documents and records  
Medical arrangements  
Fitness for duty and avoidance of excessive fatigue  
Operational and maintenance instructions for equipment,  
unless provided separately

#### B The ship in port

Accepting cargo  
Loading and discharging procedures, including those related  
to dangerous goods  
Harbour watches and patrols  
Liaison with shore authorities  
Monitoring trim and stability  
Procedures when the ship is temporarily immobilized  
Accidental spillage of liquid cargoes and ship's bunkers  
Use of reception facilities for oil, noxious liquids and garbage  
Response to oil pollution incidents

#### C Preparing for sea

Verification of passenger numbers, when applicable  
Checking and recording draughts  
Checking stability condition  
Assessment of weather conditions  
Securing cargo, hatches and all openings in the hull  
Tests of engines, steering gear, navigation and communications equipment  
Harbour stations  
Documentation of sailing condition  
Verification of pollution prevention equipment and arrangements

#### D The ship at sea

Bridge and engine-room watchkeeping arrangements  
Special requirements in bad weather and fog  
Radiocommunications, including use of VHF  
Manoeuvring data, unless provided separately  
Emergency procedures other than those covered separately  
Security patrols, fire patrols and other arrangements for surveillance  
Discharge into the sea of oily water from machinery space bilges, cargo  
residues from oil tankers, noxious liquid substances and garbage

**Notes:**

1 The above list is for guidance only and may be varied to take account of the circumstances of the particular ship or its operations.

2 The operations documentation should include the statement that its contents do not restrict the master's authority to take such steps and issue any orders, whether or not they are in accordance with the contents of the documentation, which are considered to be necessary for the preservation of life, the safety of the ship or the prevention of marine pollution.

## APPENDIX 2

### MAJOR INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Dealing with the ship

SOLAS 74 (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974) as amended, lays down a comprehensive range of minimum standards for the safe construction of ships and for the basic safety equipment (e.g. fire prevention, navigational, life-saving and radio) to be carried on board. SOLAS also contains operational instructions, particularly on emergency procedures, and provides for regular surveys and for the issue of certificates of compliance.

The International Bulk Chemical (IBC) and International Gas Carrier (IGC) Codes are mandatory requirements under SOLAS 74.

MARPOL 73/78 (International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto) as amended, contains measures designed to prevent pollution caused both accidentally and in the course of routine operations. Five annexes in the Convention cover, respectively, pollution by oil, noxious liquid substances in bulk, harmful substances carried in packaged forms, sewage and garbage. The International Bulk Chemical (IBC) and the Bulk Chemical (BCH) Codes are mandatory under MARPOL 73/78.

COLREG (Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972), as amended, lays down the basic "rules of the road", such as rights of way, safe speed, action to avoid collision, procedures to observe in narrow channels and in restricted visibility.

International Convention on Load Lines, 1966 sets the minimum permissible freeboard, according to the season of the year and the trading area of the ship; special ship construction standards are laid down in regard to watertightness.

#### Dealing with the shipowner

IMO resolution A.441(XI). IMO invited every State to take the necessary steps to ensure that the owner of a ship which flies the flag of that State provides such State with the current information necessary to enable it to identify and contact the person contracted or otherwise entrusted by the owner to discharge his responsibilities for that ship in regard to matters relating to maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment.

#### Dealing with the seafarer and the ship

ILO Convention 147 (Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention 1976) requires Administrations to have effective legislation on safe manning standards, hours of work, seafarers' competency, and social security. It also sets employment standards equivalent to those contained in a range of ILO instruments (covering e.g., minimum age, medical care and examination, social security, training).



Dealing with the seafarer

STCW (International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978) lays down training, certification and qualification requirements (including syllabuses and sea time) for senior officers; all officers in charge of watches in the deck, engine and radio departments; and ratings forming part of a watch. All such seafarers are required to have a certificate, endorsed in a uniform manner. It also specifies basic principles to be observed in keeping deck and engine watches and special qualification requirements for personnel on oil, chemical and liquefied gas tankers.

IMO resolution A.481(XII) (on principles of safe manning) recommended that all Administrations provide each of their registered ships with a document specifying the minimum number and grades of qualified seafaring personnel required to be carried from the safety standpoint. It gives basic principles and detailed guidance to be observed by Administrations when assessing the safe manning of ships.

IMO resolution A.443(XI). IMO invited Governments to take the necessary steps to safeguard the shipmaster in the proper discharge of his responsibilities in regard to maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment by ensuring that:

- (a) the shipmaster is not constrained by the shipowner, charterer or any other person from taking in this respect any decision which, in the professional judgement of the shipmaster, is necessary;
  - (b) the shipmaster is protected by the appropriate provisions, including the right of appeal, contained in, inter alia, national legislation, collective agreements or contracts of employment, from unjustifiable dismissal or other unjustifiable action by the shipowner, charterer or any other person as a consequence of the proper exercise of his professional judgement.
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