

MSC/Circular.587 - Life-Saving Appliances - (adopted on 2 July 1991)

The Maritime Safety Committee

. The Maritime Safety Committee, at its sixtieth session (6 to 10 April 1992), noted information provided on dangers to persons in totally enclosed lifeboats from fumes given off from around the engine of such lifeboats and decided to bring the information given at annex to the attention of Member Governments

Annex - Fumes in Totally Enclosed Lifeboats

Notice to shipowners, masters, officers, ratings and lifeboat builders

1. Following a successful abandonment of an offshore installation, reports were received that personnel suffered considerable discomfort from the fumes given off from around the engine in a Totally Enclosed Motor Propelled Survival Craft (TEMPSC). Even with the ventilation ports open, the fumes were sufficiently noxious to cause some people to seek fresh air on top of the lifeboat canopy. In addition, the fumes contributed to the rapid onset of sea sickness. Recent trials have shown that engine fumes can be a serious problem during a TEMPSC evacuation. Crews and maintenance personnel of TEMPSCs should be alerted to these dangers.

2. At periodic inspections of survival craft, owners and masters are strongly recommended to check their existing totally enclosed lifeboats to ensure that:

- .1. there are no exhaust system leaks;
- .2. there are no oil or diesel leaks and the engines are clean;
- .3. the exhaust and its lagging runs clear of the bilge water area and that there is little risk of bilge water contacting the engine manifold and exhaust when the lifeboat is in use;
- .4. exhaust lagging is clean and dry and of a non-absorbent type;
- .5. bilges are kept dry and clear of oil;
- .6. any paint used on engines, manifolds and exhausts does not give off fumes when it is heated.

3. At periodic lifeboat launching drills, while the totally enclosed lifeboat is in the water, the opportunity should be taken to run the engine to full operational temperature to see if fumes develop. It is recommended that these checks should be carried out at least once a year. If fumes do develop, then the advice of the lifeboat manufacturer should be sought and the flag Administration informed.

4. When a totally enclosed lifeboat is to be provided, it is recommended that the lifeboat builder run the engine for at least two hours to establish that noxious or nauseous fumes are not generated within the lifeboat before it is delivered to the ship or offshore installation and prior to the surveyor's approval trials. Lifeboat builders should ensure that the positioning of the exhaust system is such as to lead it clear of the bilge water area.