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INFORMATION ON PROHIBITING THE USE OF ASBESTOS ON BOARD SHIPS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its eighty-eighth session (24 November to 3 December 2010), approved information on prohibiting the use of asbestos on board ships, as set out in the annex, with the aim of raising awareness about the dangers involved among parties concerned.

2 Member Governments, in their capacity as flag, port or coastal States, as well as international organizations concerned, are invited to note the information provided herein and bring it to the attention of all parties concerned (including maritime Administrations, recognized organizations, port authorities, shipbuilders and ship repairers, and equipment suppliers), requesting them to make use of it as it may be deemed appropriate.

ANNEX

INFORMATION ON PROHIBITING THE USE OF ASBESTOS ON BOARD SHIPS

Introduction

1 Since 1 July 2002, the installation of materials that contain asbestos has, under SOLAS regulation II-1/3-5, been prohibited for all ships, except for some vanes, joints and insulation. From 1 January 2011, any installation of materials that contain asbestos will, under SOLAS regulation II-1/3-5, be prohibited, for all ships without exceptions.

2 Despite the clear and unambiguous prohibition of asbestos containing materials (ACMs), asbestos is still found on various locations on board ships. During inspections, asbestos has been found in such places as fire blankets, joints and insulation materials, types of sealants, friction material for brakes, wall and ceiling coverings, cords, remnants, electric fuses, etc. Moreover, ships that initially were free of asbestos appear to have asbestos on board as a result of repairs at shipyards and/or of purchasing spare parts at a later stage.

Purpose

3 The purpose of this circular is to:

- .1 raise awareness among maritime Administrations, recognized organizations, shipbuilders and ship repairers, equipment suppliers and all other parties concerned of the fact that asbestos is still being used on ships, notwithstanding its prohibition as stated in paragraph 1 above;
- .2 highlight that the principal means of addressing the issue of asbestos being found on board ships in contravention of the aforementioned provisions of SOLAS rests with shipyards and ship suppliers purchasing and installing asbestos free material;
- .3 underline the importance of proper training of surveyors and inspectors in detecting asbestos and ACMs on board ships;
- .4 prevent any further use of asbestos on board ships; and
- .5 stress the importance of maritime Administrations taking appropriate action in case ACMs are found on board ships, in contravention of the aforementioned provisions of the SOLAS Convention.

Applicability on seagoing ships

4 Ships built before 1 July 2002 are allowed to have ACMs on board. However, the ACMs are only allowed as long as they do not pose a risk to the crew's health. The crew should be aware of the dangers of asbestos and should know how to deal with asbestos in case disturbance of the ACMs cannot be avoided¹.

¹ Refer to MSC/Circ.1045, Guidelines for maintenance and monitoring of on-board materials containing asbestos.

5 Since 1 July 2002, new installation of ACMs on board all ships has been allowed only in exceptional cases.

6 From 1 January 2011, new installation of ACMs on board all ships will, without exception, no longer be allowed.

Recognizing asbestos containing materials

7 Asbestos is used for its specific characteristics such as fire resistance, thermal insulation, electrical insulation, strength, flexibility, etc. Therefore, asbestos is used in various locations throughout a ship. Inspectors should be aware of the large number of probable asbestos applications on board.

8 Asbestos is a fibrous material and can often be identified visually on that basis. However, most asbestos is used on board in materials where it cannot easily be identified visually.

9 It is recommended that, whenever an item or material is to be installed, it is ensured that the item or material has a statement of compliance, or similar, with the relevant SOLAS regulation. This may take the form of an "asbestos free declaration". Due diligence should be paid to such statements or declarations and it is recommended that random confirmations are carried out.

10 Although asbestos in most ACMs can only be ascertained by experts in specialized laboratories, it is possible to provide training to crew members, surveyors and inspectors in identifying materials that might be ACMs. As a result of such training, the crew and ship surveyors and inspectors can avoid health risks by having the suspected material sampled and analysed first. In case sampling and analysing by experts is not possible, the crew and ship surveyors and inspectors should treat the material as if it contains asbestos in order to avoid possible health risks.

Training of surveyors and inspectors

11 Surveyors and inspectors that are charged with asbestos investigations on board ships should be trained in recognizing asbestos and ACMs. They should also be trained in taking samples and should be instructed when to call in experts to conduct the investigation.

12 Surveyors and inspectors should be aware of the dangers of exposure to asbestos and should, while performing their corresponding duties, take all necessary precautions.

Action to be taken in case of contraventions of the SOLAS Convention regulation II-1/3-5

13 When asbestos is detected on board, in contravention of SOLAS regulation II-1/3-5, action should be taken to have it removed. The removal – assigned to professional asbestos removal companies – should take place within a time frame of 3 years from the date when the contravention is found and should be conducted in close consultation with and, where applicable, under the supervision of the flag State concerned. In such cases, a suitable exemption certificate should be issued by the flag State.