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MSC.1/Circ.1207
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EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT SOLAS REGULATION III/19.3.3.4

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its eighty-first session (10 to 19 May 2006), approved a draft amendment to SOLAS regulation III/19.3.3.4 concerning provisions for the launch of free-fall lifeboats during abandon ship drills, as follows:

“19.3.3.4 In the case of a lifeboat arranged for free-fall launching, at least once every three months during an abandon ship drill the crew shall board the lifeboat, properly secure themselves in their seats and commence the launch procedure up to but not including the actual release of the lifeboat (i.e., the release hook shall not be released). The lifeboat shall then either be free-fall launched with only the required operating crew on board, or lowered into the water by means of the secondary means of launching without the operating crew on board, and then manoeuvred in the water by the operating crew. At intervals of not more than six months, the lifeboat shall either be launched by free-fall with only the operating crew on board, or simulated launching shall be carried out in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Organization.*”

* Refer to the Measures to prevent accidents with lifeboats (MSC.1/Circ.1206).

2 In view of the expiration of MSC/Circ.1115, which addressed free-fall launching from high-launch heights, and in order to improve the safety of abandon ship drills involving free-fall lifeboats, and recognizing that considerable time will pass before the amendment will enter into force, the Committee urges Member Governments to give the amended regulation early effect, pending its formal entry into force.

3 Member Governments are also invited to accept ships flying the flags of other States conducting drills in accordance with the 1974 SOLAS Convention and the above approved amendment.