



Key Issues

Lifeboat Safety

ICS continues to lead the Industry Lifeboat Group (ILG), which was first established in 2007 to consider solutions to an alarming spate of injuries among seafarers during drills due to some fundamental flaws with lifeboat design and the means of getting them into the water. Although not statistically proven, anecdotally it was often said that more seafarers had been killed by lifeboats during drills than had actually been saved by them, and a number of safety-critical issues remain to be resolved.

The ILG consists of representatives drawn from a number of IMO Member States and shipping NGOs, and is chaired by ICS. Its objective is to develop proposals to IMO in order to address both immediate and longer term lifeboat safety issues.

In March 2019, ICS and other ILG members co-sponsored a submission to the IMO Sub Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment which proposed amendments to the IMO Life Saving Appliances (LSA) Code, in order to ensure adequate safety standards for lifeboats and rescue boats fitted with single fall and hook systems with onload release capability. Disappointingly, the Sub Committee found insufficient time to consider this proposal. However, discussions on this subject will continue at IMO in 2019.

The ILG is also considering a new output to the IMO Maritime Safety Committee to amend the LSA Code to provide additional technical standards for wire ropes in launching appliances, using falls and a winch, in order to enhance safety by reducing accidents.

Discussions also continue on the ventilation of survival craft other than totally enclosed lifeboats, following IMO having agreed amendments to the LSA Code for totally enclosed lifeboats which are expected to enter into force in 2024 for new installations. The amendments to the LSA Code will require that a totally enclosed lifeboat must be provided with a ventilation system capable of delivering 5m³/hour per person for the maximum number of persons which the lifeboat is permitted to accommodate for a period of not less than 24 hours. ICS, ILG members and several Member States have argued that any metric introduced should be goal based and avoid unintended consequences for survival craft other than totally enclosed lifeboats. However, these arguments were not accepted by IMO. The issue will continue to be discussed at future IMO meetings.

Meanwhile, ICS and other ILG members are co-sponsoring a submission to the Maritime Safety Committee in June 2019 proposing a new output to develop design and

prototype test requirements for the arrangements used in the operational testing of free-fall lifeboat release systems without launching the lifeboat (equipment used in the simulated launching of free-fall lifeboats). This submission is in response to an incident in Australia regarding an unintentional release of a free-fall lifeboat, following which it was recommended that simulation equipment (such as wires) used for maintenance and testing should be approved and designed to take into account the lifeboat's static weight as well as the shock loading that would be experienced during a simulated launch.

The ILG has also highlighted a major concern regarding the mandatory requirement under the SOLAS Convention for launching and manoeuvring lifeboats in water every three months, compliance with which is often made difficult by bad weather or the vessel's schedule, and is further complicated when ports or terminals will not allow lowering into the water. While the responsibility for lowering into water and manoeuvring rests with the ship, it would greatly assist vessels to meet this requirement if ports and terminals were more accommodating. The ILG is reviewing how best to address this matter within IMO.

