



**PANAMA MARITIME AUTHORITY**  
**Directorate General of Merchant Marine**  
**International Representative Office, N.Y.**

**Merchant Marine Circular No. 152**

**To: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF MERCHANT SHIPS, AGENTS AND RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS**

**Subject: Harmonized System of Surveys and Certification**

**Reference:**

- (a) **International Conference on Harmonized System of Surveys and Certification, 1988 (HSSC)**
- (b) **SOLAS Protocol 1988**
- (c) **Load Line Protocol 1988**
- (d) **MEPC Resolution MEPC 39(29)**
- (e) **Law No. 29 & 31 of July 1, 2007**

**Purpose**

1. This Merchant Marine Circular provides guidelines for the implementation of the 1988 Harmonized System of Survey and Certification (HSSC) on vessels flying Panama flag.

**Application**

2. The 1988 SOLAS and Load Line Protocols and the related amendments to MARPOL 73/78 regarding HSSC entered into force on 03 February 2000. The Republic of Panama has ratified the Protocols and deposited the adoption before IMO on September 17, 2007. Therefore, for all ships entitled to fly the flag of the Republic of Panama, the application of the Harmonized System of Surveys and Certification becomes effective on February 17, 2008.

3. Shipowners and authorized Recognized Organizations are requested to follow Resolution A.948(23), as amended by MEPC.128(53), and these guidelines for the implementation of the HSSC.

4. Owners may take the advantage to survey and certify all new constructed ships under HSSC system before the implementation date indicated in this Merchant Marine Circular, if owners and their recognized organization agree to.

**Background**

5. The international requirements introducing the harmonized system of survey and certification for the SOLAS and Load Lines Conventions were adopted by IMO at an International Conference on the Harmonized System of Survey and Certification held in 1988 - which itself had its origins in the 1978 Conference on Tanker Safety and Pollution Prevention which recognized the difficulties caused by the survey and certification requirements of SOLAS, the Load Lines Convention and MARPOL 73/78. The 1978 Conference called upon IMO to develop a harmonized system which would enable the surveys to be carried out at the same time.



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6. The system covers survey and certification requirements of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, the International Convention on Load Lines, (LL) 1966 and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78), as well as the International Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk (IBC Code), Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk (BCH Code) and Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Liquefied Gases in Bulk (IGC Code).

**The Harmonized System**

7. The Harmonized System of Survey and Certification (HSSC) sets standards for the periods of validity and surveys intervals for the ten main conventions and codes certificates. In so doing it aims to simplify the survey and certification process.

The harmonized system provides for:

- a) a one-year standard interval between surveys, based on initial, annual, intermediate, periodical and renewal surveys as appropriate;
- b) a scheme for providing the necessary flexibility for the execution of each survey with the provision that the renewal survey may be completed within three months before the expiry date of the existing certificate with no loss of its period of validity;
- c) a maximum period of validity of five years for all certificates for cargo ships;
- d) a maximum period of validity of 12 months for the Passenger Ship Safety Certificate;
- e) a system for the extension of certificates limited to three months to enable a ship to complete its voyage;
- f) a scheme to maintain the 5 year cycle when an extension has been granted by requiring that the period of validity of the new certificate does not exceed 5 years from the expiry date of the existing certificate.
- g) a flexible system for inspection of the outside of the ship's bottom on the following conditions:
  - a minimum of two inspections during any five-year period of validity of the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate;
  - the interval between any two such inspections shall not exceed 36 months;

8. The main changes to the SOLAS and Load Lines Conventions are that annual inspections have been made mandatory for cargo ships, unscheduled inspections are no longer included and intermediate surveys are required for all ships under the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate. Other changes refer to survey intervals and requirements.



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**Survey Types**

9. Under the HSSC, there are seven types of survey:
- a) **Initial Survey.** A complete examination, before the ship is put into service, of all items relating to the certificate to be issued, to ensure that they meet all relevant requirements, and that they are satisfactory for the ship's intended service.
  - b) **Periodical Survey.** A completion examination of all items relating to a certificate to ensure that they are in a satisfactory condition, and that they are fit for the ship's intended service.
  - c) **Renewal Survey.** A complete examination of all items relating to a certificate as for a periodical survey, but leading to the issue of a new certificate.
  - d) **Intermediate Survey.** An inspection of specific items relating to a certificate to ensure that they are in a satisfactory condition, and that they are fit for the ship's intended service.
  - e) **Annual Survey.** A general inspection of the items relating to a certificate to ensure that they have been maintained and remain fit for the ship's intended service.
  - f) **Inspection of the Outside of the Ships Bottom.** An inspection of the underwater part of the ship and related items to ensure that they are in a satisfactory condition, and that they are fit for the ship's intended service.
  - g) **Additional Survey.** An inspection, either general or partial according to circumstance, to be made after a repair resulting from investigation, or whenever any important repairs or renewals are made.
10. List of certificates required on board ship relating to harmonized system of survey and certification (some depend on type of ship)
- a) Passenger Ship Safety Certificate, including Record of Equipment (Form P);
  - b) Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate;
  - c) Cargo Ship Safety Equipment Certificate, including Record of Equipment (Form E);
  - d) Cargo Ship Safety Radio Certificate, including Record of Equipment (Form R);
  - e) Cargo Ship Safety Certificate, including Record of Equipment (Form C);
  - f) International Load Lines Certificate;
  - g) International Oil Pollution Prevention Certificate;
  - h) International Pollution Prevention Certificate for the Carriage of Noxious Liquid Substances in Bulk;



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- i) International Air Pollution Prevention Certificate;
- j) International Certificate of Fitness for the Carriage of Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk;
- k) International Certificate of Fitness for the Carriage of Liquefied Gases in Bulk;
- l) Certificate of Fitness for the Carriage of Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk.

**Uniform implementation of HSSC**

11. Existing certificates will remain valid until such time when HSSC certificates are issued or until their expiration date, whichever first occurs.

12. The Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate is to be used as the basis to implement the HSSC considering that this certificate governs the interval for the dry-docking surveys. Using other certificates may require the vessel to undergo an additional dry-docking survey.

13. Alignment of Certificates: The validity date of the current Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate is to be used as the basis for implementing HSSC on a particular vessel. This date most likely coincides with the validity date of the other 5-year statutory certificates that the vessel has, and should also be the same as that of the classification certificate.

**When Cargo Ship Safety Construction expires first after February 17, 2008.**

14. The other certificates (e.g. Cargo Ship Safety Equipment, Cargo Ship Safety Radio, Load Line and/or Oil Pollution Prevention certificates) are also to be re-issued in HSSC format at the same time the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate is issued in HSSC format. The validity period of the other certificates would be adjusted to correspond with that of the HSSC Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate.

15. If the other certificates Renewal Surveys have been completed within 3 months of the completion of the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate Renewal Survey, then the other renewal surveys can be credited and a general examination of the other certificates' items (e.g. Cargo Ship Safety Equipment, Cargo Ship Safety Radio, Load Line and/or Oil Pollution Prevention certificates) need only be completed pursuant to the issuance of the 5-year HSSC certificates.

16. If the other certificates Renewal Surveys have not been completed within 3 months of the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate Renewal survey, Renewal Surveys are to be performed at the time of Cargo Ship Safety Construction renewal.

17. All certificates will then be renewed and re-issued with a 5-year validity period and the same survey due date.



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**When the other certificate(s) expire(s) before the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate but after February 17, 2008.**

18. They are to be renewed in HSSC format with their validity limited to the validity date of the current Cargo Ship Safety Construction. This will establish a new anniversary date for the other certificates so that when the Cargo Ship Safety Construction is renewed, all certificates will then be renewed and re-issued with a 5-year validity period and the same survey due date.

19. The other certificates issued may have an initial validity less than 5 years. In this case, annual endorsements should start with the top line and proceed down until the certificate expires, recognizing that not all endorsement lines will be signed.

20. If the other certificates Renewal Surveys have been completed within 3 months of the completion of the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate Renewal survey, then the other renewal surveys can be credited and a general examination of the other certificates' items (e.g. Cargo Ship Safety Equipment, Cargo Ship Safety Radio, Load Line and/or Oil Pollution Prevention certificates) need only be completed pursuant to the issuance of the 5-year HSSC certificates.

21. If the other Renewal surveys have not been completed within 3 months of the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate anniversary date, an Annual/Periodical Survey is to be performed at the time of the next Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate Annual survey. If, in such cases, the Cargo Ship Safety Construction anniversary date is also the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate expiration date, then Renewal surveys are to be carried out at the time of the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Renewal survey (rather than Annual/Periodical survey).

**Port State Control (PSC)**

22. PSC officers are invited to use the above guidelines when applying the provisions of the 1988 Protocols to Panama flagged vessels and, in accordance with SOLAS Chapter I Regulation 19, notify this Administration of any deficiencies encountered during the inspection, for consideration and decision on the actions taken.

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