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CIRCULAR

Revised recommendation on the use and fitting of retro-reflective materials on life-saving appliances

The Maritime Safety Committee on its 102nd Session has released revised recommendations on the use and fitting of retro-reflective materials on life-saving appliances

Notice to: [Ship Owners/ Managers/ Operators](#) | [Surveyors/Auditors](#)

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The Maritime Safety Committee on its 102nd Session, has released Resolution [MSC.481\(102\)](#), adopted on November 09, 2020, which supersedes resolution A.658(16).

Lifeboats and rescue boats

Retro-reflective materials should be fitted on top of the gunwale as well as on the outside of the boat as near the gunwale as possible. The materials should be sufficiently wide and long to give a minimum area of 150 cm² and should be spaced at suitable intervals (approximately 80 cm from centre to centre). If a canopy is fitted, it should not be allowed to obscure the materials fitted on the outside of the boat, and the top of the canopy should be fitted with retro-reflective materials similar to those mentioned above and spaced at suitable intervals (approximately 80 cm centre to centre). In the case of partially enclosed or totally enclosed lifeboats, such materials should be placed, as follows:

1. for detection by horizontal light beams - at suitable intervals at half the height between the gunwale and the top of the fixed cover;
2. for detection by vertical light beams (e.g. from helicopters) - at suitable intervals around the outer portion of the horizontal (or comparable) part of the top of the fixed cover; and
3. on the bottom of lifeboats and rescue boats which are not self-righting.

Liferafts

Retro-reflective materials should be fitted around the canopy of the liferaft. The materials should be sufficiently wide and long to give a minimum area of 150 cm² and should be spaced at suitable intervals (approximately 80 cm from centre to centre) at a suitable height above the waterline, doorways included, if suitable. On inflatable liferafts, retro-reflective materials should also be fitted to the underside of the floor, cross-shaped in the centre.

The dimension of the cross should be half the diameter of the liferaft, and a similar cross should be applied to the top of the canopy.

On liferafts which are not equipped with canopies, materials which should be sufficiently wide and long (to give a minimum area of 150 cm²) should be attached to the buoyancy chamber at suitable intervals (approximately 80 cm from centre to centre), in such a manner that they are visible both from the air and from a ship.

Lifebuoys

Retro-reflective materials of a sufficient width (approximately 5 cm) should be applied around or on both sides of the body of the lifebuoy at four evenly-spaced points.

Buoyant apparatus

Buoyant apparatus should be fitted with retro-reflective materials in the same manner as liferafts without canopies, always depending on the size and shape of the object. Such materials should be visible both from the air and from a ship.

Lifejackets

Lifejackets should be fitted with patches of retro-reflective materials with a total area of at least 400 cm² distributed so as to be useful for search from air and surface craft from all directions. In the case of a reversible lifejacket, the arrangement should be complied with no matter which way the lifejacket is put on. Such materials should be placed as high up on the lifejacket as possible.

Immersion suits

Immersion suits should be fitted with patches of retro-reflective material with a total area of at least 400 cm² distributed so as to be useful for search from air and surface craft from all directions.

For an immersion suit that does not automatically turn the wearer face up, the back of the suit should be fitted with retro-reflective material with a total area of at least 100 cm².

Retro-reflective materials should be such as will meet the minimum technical specification given in the Res. MSC.481(102).

The illustrations reproduced in the Resolution are intended to provide Administrations with examples from which guidance may be taken when fitting retro-reflective materials in accordance with these recommendations.

Act now

Ship owners / Managers / Operators should take into consideration the revised recommendations included in the IMO Resolution.

Source: *IMO*