Amendments to LSA code as mandated by MSC.554 (108)

Introduction

The International Life-Saving Appliance (LSA) Code was adopted by resolution MSC.48 (66) and has been made mandatory under SOLAS chapter III. The Code establishes detailed technical and performance standards for life-saving appliances and associated launching arrangements.

At its 108th session, the Maritime Safety Committee adopted resolution MSC.554 (108), introducing targeted amendments to the LSA Code following consideration of operational experience and safety concerns identified during service and testing of life-saving appliances.

Entry into Force and Application

The amendments shall enter into force on 1 January 2026 and **shall apply to life-saving appliances INSTALLED** on or after that date, as defined in the resolution. Administrations, Recognized Organizations and industry stakeholders are encouraged to take these dates into account when planning newbuilding projects, equipment procurement and installation activities.

Life-saving appliances installed prior to 1 January 2026 may continue to comply with the requirements in force at the time of installation and are not subject to retrofit solely as a result of these amendments, unless otherwise required by the Administration.

Summary of amendments

The amendments introduced by resolution MSC.554 (108) consist of specific revisions to performance and design requirements contained in the LSA Code.

1. Life Jackets

In chapter II, relating to personal life-saving appliances, the performance requirement for lifejackets is clarified by specifying that a lifejacket must be capable of turning an unconscious, face down person in the water to a face-up position, with the nose and mouth clear of the water, within a defined average time criterion. This amendment is intended to improve the objectivity and consistency of lifejacket performance testing.

2. Lifeboat release and retrieval hook arrangements

In chapter IV, relating to survival craft, amendments are introduced to the requirements for lifeboat release and retrieval hook arrangements. The revised provisions strengthen safeguards against accidental release during recovery by requiring that hooks cannot support any load unless fully reset and by preventing handles, safety pins or indicators from giving a false indication of reset status. Additional warning signage at hook stations is required to draw crew attention to correct resetting procedures.

Further clarification is provided for single-fall and hook systems, permitting certain exemptions from existing requirements where the system design does not allow release under load when not fully waterborne.

3. Lowering speeds of survival craft and rescue boats

In chapter VI, relating to launching and embarkation appliances, the amendments revise the requirements governing lowering speeds of survival craft and rescue boats. A clarified minimum lowering speed formula is introduced, together with a defined maximum lowering speed, subject to limited acceptance by the Administration based on design considerations, occupant protection and the strength of launching arrangements. The amendments also require incorporation of means to ensure that maximum lowering speeds are not exceeded during operation.

Conclusion

The amendments to the International Life-Saving Appliance Code adopted by resolution MSC.554(108) introduce targeted technical refinements intended to enhance the safety, reliability and functional performance of life-saving appliances and launching arrangements. By clarifying performance criteria for lifejackets, strengthening safeguards against accidental release of lifeboat hooks, and refining requirements for the lowering speeds of survival craft and rescue boats, the amendments address identified operational risks while maintaining consistency with the SOLAS chapter III framework. The application of these requirements to installations on or after 1 January 2026 provides a clear and practicable implementation threshold, supporting orderly compliance by Administrations, Recognized Organizations and industry stakeholders.

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