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NVIC 9-99

NAVIGATION AND VESSEL INSPECTION CIRCULAR

Subj: PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT REQUIRED FOR FIREFIGHTER'S OUTFITS

Ref: (a) 46 CFR 35.30-20  
(b) 46 CFR 77.35-5  
(c) 46 CFR 96.35-5  
(d) 46 CFR 108.497  
(e) SOLAS Regulation II-2/17  
(f) NFPA 1971, Standard on Protective Ensemble for Structural Fire Fighting (1997 Edition)

1. PURPOSE. This circular provides recommendations on protective clothing intended for firefighter's outfits required on merchant vessels.
2. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. This circular supercedes Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 4-68.
3. BACKGROUND.
  - a. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) require two firefighter's outfits to be aboard for each cargo vessel. For tank vessels, the CFR requires two firefighter's outfits, and SOLAS requires four firefighter's outfits. Presently, the United States Coast Guard does not have a program of approving firefighter's outfits. References (a) through (e) describe protective clothing as a "...material that will protect the skin from the heat of fire and burns from scalding steam. The outer surface shall be water resistant."

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	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
A																										
B	*	2	2											30												1
C					*									*												
D											1	*														
E														1	2											
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- b. In order to describe acceptable firefighter's outfits more clearly, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) published NVIC 4-68 in 1968. The circular discussed four acceptable types of items that are suitable for the intended purpose of firefighting. A brief description of the items was given. These items were limited to protective clothing, boots, gloves and helmets.
- c. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has since established a standard on protective ensembles for structural fire fighting. This standard is NFPA 1971, Standard on Protective Ensemble for Structural Fire Fighting (reference (f)). The current NFPA 1971 provides guidance on the minimum requirements for design, manufacturing and certification of protective ensembles used in structural fire fighting. These ensembles include coats, trousers, coveralls, helmets, gloves, footwear, and interfacing components.

#### 4. DISCUSSION.

- a. NFPA 1971 is acceptable as a supplemental guide in the minimum design, performance, and certification requirements for firefighter's outfits. Through NFPA 1971, minimum design and performance criteria have already been established for coats, trousers, helmets, gloves, footwear, and interfacing components among these items. A certification process is also given in this standard which includes necessary tests and testing methods for each item. The certifying organization provides a label, symbol or identifying mark attached to each product indicating compliance with NFPA 1971. Recertification of these items is required on a yearly basis per NFPA 1971.
- b. This circular does not apply to specialized firefighter's ensembles needed for hazardous chemical incidents.

5. IMPLEMENTATION. This circular is to help Officers in Charge, Marine Inspection (OCMIs), inform and guide United States merchant mariners on acceptable firefighter's outfit requirements. A firefighter's outfit which complies with NFPA 1971 meets the regulations in references (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e).

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