

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

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NVIC 3-79
12 Jun 1979

NAVIGATION AND VESSEL INSPECTION CIRCULAR NO. 3-79

Subj: Lifeboat Capacity on Foreign Flag Passenger Vessels

1. **PURPOSE** This Circular establishes procedures for ascertaining the seating capacity of lifeboats on foreign flag passenger vessels during control verification examinations.
2. **BACKGROUND.** Vessels of over 100 gross tons having berth or stateroom accommodations for 50 or more passengers are prohibited by 46 U.S.C. 362(c) from departing a U.S. port with U.S. passengers embarked in that port, unless the vessel is in compliance with the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea, 1960. Several examinations for control verification have revealed deficiencies involving the capacity rating of lifeboats, and the requirements of SOLAS 60, Chapter III, Regulation 7 in that there was insufficient space to accommodate the rated number of seated adult persons wearing lifejackets. Consequently, revised ratings were required to be marked on the lifeboats involved, and the number of passengers permitted to be carried was reduced to that which could be accommodated according to the actual lifeboat capacity. Some affected vessels are being equipped with additional davit launched inflatable liferafts in accordance with SOLAS Chapter III, Regulations 27(b)(i) and 29(n)(i) in order to regain the full passenger capacities permitted by their SOLAS Safety Certificates.
3. **DISCUSSION.**
 - a. Vessels having lifeboat capacity deficiencies are not distinguishable by flag or classification society. On an individual vessel, some boats have been found to be rated over capacity while others were satisfactory. For one type of lifeboat, rated accommodation requires adherence to a seating plan. Compliance with SOLAS requires each lifeboat, with all of its equipment aboard, to provide every person in its rated capacity with a proper seat in a safe location which in no way interferes with the operation of propulsion equipment.
 - b. The following examples represent improper accommodation which shall not be accepted for passenger rating purposes:
 - (1) persons who must stand or squat,
 - (2) persons seated on or over release hooks,
 - (3) persons seated on gunwales, cross braces and bulkhead edges without adequate horizontal seating area,
 - (4) persons seated on narrow ledges, braces or seat corners which cannot afford comfortable support for an extended period of time,
 - (5) persons seated in any manner which obstructs the use of oars or oarlocks,

- (6) persons seated in any manner which obstructs the operation of hand propelling gear, including the reversing gear,
- (7) persons seated in any manner which interferes with starting and operating the engine or observing gages, and
- (8) persons seated in any manner which obstructs the use of the tiller.

4. ACTION

a. At each initial Control Verification Examination or subsequent examination where lifeboat capacity has not been verified or where capacity ratings have changed, OCMI's shall determine compliance with SOLAS 60, Chapter III, Regulation 7. In making this determination, an actual seating demonstration may be ordered for any boat which is suspected to be overrated. If a specific seating plan is required for the accommodation of rated capacity, this plan must be posted in the boat or displayed by seat plan markings in the boats, and a copy must be provided to the boat commander. The following guidelines may be useful in identifying boats which should be closely examined, however, they do not necessarily confirm compliance:

- 1) Coast Guard experience with large open motor and hand propelled lifeboats indicates that the proper capacity in number of persons is almost always less than that indicated by calculating:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Capacity} &= \text{Length} \times \text{Breadth} \times \text{Depth (in feet)} \times 0.064, \text{ or} \\ \text{Capacity} &= \text{Length} \times \text{Breadth} \times \text{Depth (in meters)} \times 2.26 \end{aligned}$$

Boats which are rated in excess of that calculated by the above should be subjected to an actual seating test with persons wearing life preservers to ascertain the capacity.

- (2) The proper capacity is usually close to the number indicated by calculating:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Capacity} &= \text{Length} \times \text{Breadth} \times \text{Depth (in feet)} \times 0.058, \text{ or} \\ \text{Capacity} &= \text{Length} \times \text{Breadth} \times \text{Depth (in meters)} \times 2.05 \end{aligned}$$

Boats which are rated in excess of that calculated in formula (2) but below that calculated in formula (1), may be subjected to a simplified test by measuring 17 inch increments along thwarts and beriches where there appears to be sufficient foot and knee room. If the number of these increments is significantly less than rated capacity an actual seating test should be ordered. When considered appropriate and advantageous, results of a single seating test may be applied to apparently identical lifeboats on one or more vessels.

b. OCMI's shall require lifeboats found to be rated above actual capacity to have revised ratings displayed. Dual capacity markings may be permitted if the vessel operator elects to use the original vessel capacity rating for voyages on routes where 46 U.S.C 362(c) is inapplicable. Where the actual carrying capacity of lifeboats in combination with davit launched liferafts does not provide the required accommodation for the number of persons permitted by the vessel's SOLAS Safety Certificate, the Control Verification Certificate shall reflect the actual crew and passenger complement. Passenger capacities for vessels departing U.S. ports shall be in accordance with SOLAS 60, Chapter III, Regulation 27(b)(i) using appropriately reduced lifeboat capacities.


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