



香 港 商 船 通 告
HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING NOTICE

Watertight Subdivision Arrangements of Passenger Ships - the Number, Location and Operation of Watertight Doors

To : *Shipowners, Masters, Agents and Classification Societies*

Summary

The purposes of this Notice are to :-

- (i) specify the design and operational principles for watertight doors on board Hong Kong registered passenger ships; and
- (ii) detail the operational instructions expected for the operation of the watertight doors.

1. The Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Closing of Openings in Hulls and in Watertight Bulkheads) Regulations, come into force on 2nd August 1991.

2. These regulations apply to both new and existing Hong Kong passenger ships. They include such requirements as appear to the Director of Marine to be necessary to implement the provisions contained in regulation 15 of Chapter II-1 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974, as amended, for the closing of watertight doors and other closing appliances and devices, for their inspection, for practice drills and for relevant entries in official log books.

3. Whilst one of the primary purposes of these Regulations is to ensure that doors in watertight bulkheads are kept closed during any voyage, regulation 4(1) provides for specific exceptions to this general requirement. In particular, it permits:-

- (a) certain doors to be opened provided they are so opened in accordance with procedures laid down in written operational instructions carried on board the ship;
- (b) any door to be opened on the express authority of the master for a specific purpose.

These exceptions are not applicable in conditions of restricted visibility or in any *potentially hazardous situation*. In such circumstances the doors must be kept closed except whilst briefly opened to permit access.

4. The Regulations (regulation 4(5)) do however permit the master to authorize the opening or closing of any watertight door in an emergency situation, provided he is satisfied that such action is essential for the overall safety of the ship.

5. In order to appreciate the importance of the proper operation of a ship's watertight doors it is necessary to understand the basic design principles which govern the fitting of such doors. A general outline of those principles is given in Schedule 1 Paragraph 1 of the Regulations. Schedule 1 also contains an explanation of the correct operational procedures for watertight doors.

6. The Regulations referred to in paragraph 1 require ships to be provided with operational instructions based upon advice contained in this Notice. That advice is set out in Schedule 2 of the Regulations. A recommended format for the operational instructions is also included in Schedule 2. It is recommended that the instructions be drawn up in consultation with the ship's master and chief engineer. When they have been prepared a copy should be placed in the ship's stability booklet.

7. The operational instructions must be approved by the Director of Marine and a copy of the instructions so approved should be placed on the ship to replace the copy which is referred to in paragraph 6.

Marine Department
Multi-lateral Policy Division

4 November 1999
