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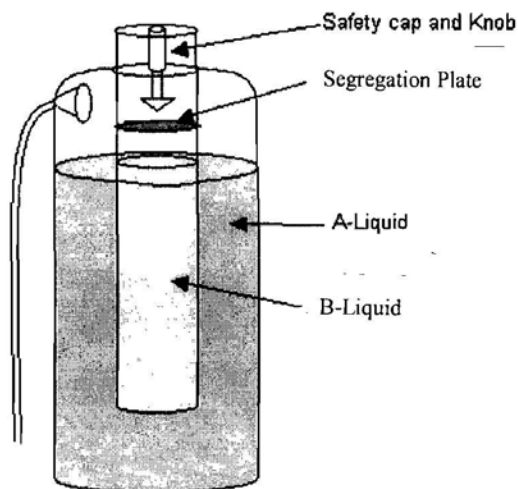
1 June 2007

*To : Shipowners, Ship Managers, Masters and Classification Societies*

### Maintenance of Portable Foam Extinguishers

Recently, some portable foam extinguishers on board a Hong Kong registered vessel have been found with improper performance during a port State control inspection. They could only discharge water instead of foam when activated and thus caused a detention to the ship. The portable foam extinguishers in question were serviced by a service provider recognized by most of the classification societies and were about 10 months after service at the time of the PSC inspection.

2. To have a clear view of this type of portable foam extinguishers, its structure and the maker's operation instruction are shown below.



#### < Instruction of the Use >

1. Pull out the safety cap and push down the knob.
2. Release the hose and point the nozzle at the base of fire.
3. Turn the extinguisher upside down and hold the bottom handle.

#### < Principle of the Foam Extinguisher >

Mixing the A and B liquids makes a foam rapidly and the expanding foam is discharged through the nozzle.

3. After investigation by the service provider and the vessel's manager, the probable causes for the failure of these portable extinguishers to discharge foam were either:-

- i) improper material, aluminium instead of lead, has been used for the segregation plate resulting in corrosion of plates with holes. Motion of the vessel could cause the mixing of the A and B liquids through the holes on the segregation plate without ship's crew awareness; or
- ii) the lead plate segregation was not fully punctured resulting in obstructing the proper mixing of the A and B liquids in the container.

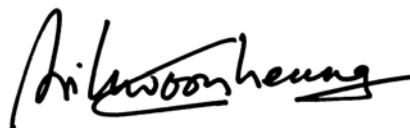
4. Please be advised that despite the fire extinguishing systems or appliances are annually serviced by a reputable service provider, it is the responsibility of the ship's manager or ship's staff to make sure that fire fighting systems and appliances shall be kept in good working condition and available for immediate use in accordance with SOLAS II-2/14.2.1.2. In addition, SOLAS II-2/14.2.2.1 also requires that maintenance, testing and inspections shall be carried out based on the guidelines in the IMO circular MSC/Circ.850 and in a manner having due regard to ensuring the reliability of fire fighting system and appliances.

5. If a similar type of portable foam extinguishers is provided on board Hong Kong registered vessels, the following should be noted :-

- a.) checked by ship's senior officers whether proper material has been used for the segregation plate in accordance with the maker's instruction; and
- b.) random test of the portable foam extinguishers should be carried out as far as possible to verify their effectiveness. The test result should be properly recorded.

6. Please feel free to contact the undersigned at tel. No. (852) 2852 4510 if you have any query in respect of the above matter.

Yours faithfully,



(S. W. Cheung)  
Senior Surveyor / Cargo Ships Safety  
for Director of Marine