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MSC.1/Circ.1493  
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## **INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR IN-SERVICE TESTING OF AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEMS**

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its ninety-fourth session (17 to 21 November 2014), taking into account the information on findings from the testing programme on automatic sprinkler systems on passenger ships implemented by the Bahamas, agreed to bring the following to the attention of shipowners, operators, system manufacturers and other parties concerned:

- .1 During annual operational testing of sprinkler heads as prescribed in the *Revised guidelines for the maintenance and inspection of fire protection systems and appliances* (MSC.1/Circ.1432), failures were identified by the Bahamas on a variety of makes and types of system. Additional testing revealed in some instances failure rates which significantly reduce the effectiveness of an automatic sprinkler system. These failures represented a number of manufacturers and included both high and low pressure systems, indicating that the reliability issues were independent of both the make and type of sprinkler head.
- .2 All identified failures occurred on ships over five years of age and involved one or more of the following modes of failure:
  - .1 blockage of the internal filters of the sprinkler heads with mineral deposits;
  - .2 build-up of scale and mineral deposits on the internal components of the sprinklers causing seizure when the sprinkler is activated; and
  - .3 corrosion of the internal components of the sprinklers causing seizure when the sprinkler is activated.

2 In considering the above findings, the Committee agreed that appropriate amendments to MSC.1/Circ.1432 and chapter 8 of the FSS Code should be considered as a matter of urgency.

3 In view of the potential consequences should automatic sprinkler systems fail to operate as intended on a ship and until appropriate recommendations are developed by the Organization as described in paragraph 2, the Committee urges shipowners, operators and system manufactures to actively monitor and assess the effectiveness of automatic sprinkler systems on a planned periodical basis in accordance to MSC.1/Circ.1432.

4 Shipowners, operators, system manufacturers and other parties concerned are also encouraged to note the guidance on the testing requirements for automatic sprinkler systems issued by the Bahamas, which is available at the following website address: <http://www.bahamasmaritime.com/downloads/bulletins/150bulltn.pdf>.

5 Member Governments and international organizations are invited to bring the above recommendations and information to the attention of shipowners, operators, system manufacturers and other parties concerned.

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