

LOCAL VESSELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Implementation of Inspection and Test Plan for High-Risk Vessels

Purpose

This paper outlines the proposed Inspection and Test Plan (ITP) for the construction of high-risk vessels¹. This systematic approach aims to enhance the inspection and testing processes for new constructions by promoting early planning and improving communication among the Builder, Buyer, and Authority. By addressing potential misunderstandings regarding key safety features of vessel design and clarifying any ambiguities of drawings at an early stage, the collaborative effort will better ensure compliance with regulatory and contractual requirements.

Background

2. A shipbuilding contract represents an agreement between a Builder and a Buyer to construct a vessel. A common contractual requirement is that the construction must comply with the standards set by the Authority which issues the necessary trading certificates for the vessel. In Hong Kong, the Marine Department (MD) serves as the regulatory Authority for verifying that the construction meets all regulatory requirements for licensing as a local vessel.

3. The verification process necessitates multiple inspections and tests conducted by MD at various stages of construction, as arranged by the Builder according to the project schedule. As the quality assurance measures adopted by shipyards can vary significantly, the correctness and completeness of above inspections and tests to be conducted could be affected.

¹ “high-risk vessel” means a Class I vessel or a Class II vessel intended for carrying cargoes of hazardous nature, such as an Oil Carrier, a Gas Carrier, a Dangerous Goods Carrier, a Noxious Liquid Substances Carrier and etc.

4. As part of the ongoing improvement effort, the shipyard will be requested to plan early for all the tests and the corresponding criteria involving the construction for review by the MD and the Buyer. Once the details are agreed upon, the initial survey can then commence in accordance with the plan.

What is an ITP

5. An ITP is a plan drawn up by the Builder that details the required inspections and tests for regulatory and contractual compliance during the construction of a new vessel. It specifies the scope and types of inspections and tests, stages at which they will be conducted, the involved parties and their responsibilities, and relevant regulatory requirements and acceptance criteria. A well-structured ITP will help the Builder in production planning and serves as a reference for the Buyer and the Authority to verify compliance with contractual and regulatory requirements respectively. With this framework, any misunderstandings and ambiguities regarding design and construction, as well as non-compliances raised by the Authority or Buyer, will be addressed collaboratively by all parties before construction begins. This framework transforms reactive corrections into preventive measures.

Implementation of ITP

6. The construction process will begin with an application made to MD for the construction of a new vessel. Upon issuing the Approval-in-Principle (AIP) letter to the applicant (Buyer), the Local Vessels Safety Section (LVSS) will advise the applicant to incorporate the ITP requirement in his shipbuilding contract with the Builder. A template of the ITP will also be provided for the applicant to pass on to the Builder for developing the ITP. The Builder shall issue that ITP to both the Buyer and the MD for comments. An agreed-upon ITP must be in place before the LVSS can commence the initial survey.

7. Vessels that are not classified as high-risk typically have simpler designs and construction processes. Therefore, an ITP is currently recommended only for high-risk vessels.

8. The proposed ITP is an operational and procedural framework and does not introduce any new requirement in relation to vessels equipment and standards.

Way Forward

9. Members are invited to review and provide constructive feedback on this framework before 25 July 2025. To establish a reliable compliance verification process, the MD will implement the proposed ITP for the construction of high-risk vessels from **1 August 2025**.

Marine Department
Local Vessels and Examination Division
July 2025