

CREW WATCH | SAFETY

Marine Evacuation Systems (MES) on board ships typically consist of large inflatable life rafts and either an inflatable slide or escape chute. These systems are designed to enable the rapid evacuation of a large number of people without requiring extensive training.

MARINE EVACUATION SAFETY EXERCISES

VALUABLE PRACTICE FOR SHIP & CREW

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The Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention requires that each MES installed on board a ship is deployed on a rotational basis, this ensures each system is deployed at least every six years. This rotational deployment provides the ship and crew with an opportunity to practise an evacuation using the MES. While these exercises are valuable training opportunities, the ship operator and crew need to be aware of the inherent risks.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

please do not hesitate to contact the loss prevention team at: lossprevention@tindalriley.com



RESTORATION OF EVACUATION SYSTEM

Deployment of an MES will generally require the system to be removed from the vessel for full service and repacking. Shipowners should prepare for this activity, noting that this system will be unavailable for some time. It is common to have a spare, certified MES ready to be installed immediately after the deployed device has been removed from the ship. This minimises any shortfall in mandatory life saving appliances.

The replacement of the deployed unit should be properly planned, risk assessed, and subject to a suitable work permit as necessary.

P&I COVER

To maintain P&I cover and to provide shipowners with guidance on potential liabilities associated with involving volunteers in a MES drill, it is imperative to promptly inform the Club's underwriting department before conducting the exercise.

COMPLIANCE

MES exercises should always be organised and managed in accordance with regulations, including those of the flag state, class and port state. Shipowners should also adhere to the equipment maker's safety and operational instructions and maintenance requirements

RISKS

There are several possible risks that shipowners should be aware of and carefully assess. These risks include, but are not limited to:

- Risk of deteriorating weather and sea conditions during the exercise
- Risk of injury at the time of using the slide/chute and boarding the life raft
- Risk of a participant becoming entrapped and blocking a chute
- Risks arising from potential exposure to water e.g. drowning or hypothermia
- Risks arising at the time of the participants' egress from the equipment
- Risk of damage to personal effects and clothing of the participants
- Risk that the MES does not deploy correctly/as per design or is damaged during use.

Mitigation measures will depend on the specific characteristic of the MES and the planned exercise, as well as the available resources such as trained crew, rescue boat(s) etc. Shipowners should conduct a risk assessment covering the entire exercise scenario in accordance with the procedures of their own Safety Management System.

SAFETY

Ship operators should have an effective process in place to ensure that all participants have been briefed and are familiar with safety processes. During the exercise, participants should be supervised and assisted to ensure their safety. Untrained volunteers should not operate the ship's equipment.

While the use of volunteers can make a MES exercise more realistic, ensuring safety for everyone involved throughout the exercise remains the main priority. By adhering to the above principles, it will be possible to mitigate the inherent risks and conduct a MES exercise that is both realistic and safe.