

SAFETY OF SUBMERSIBLE CRAFT**The Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft Operations) Regulations 1987 SI 1987 No. 311****The Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft) Amendment Regulations 1987 SI 1987 No. 306****The Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft Operations) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 SI 1987 No. 1603****Notice to Submersible Craft Owners and Operators, Submersible Craft Operations Controllers and Pilots, Shipmasters, Officers and Seamen**

The Department has made Regulations (SI 1987/311 amended by SI 1987/1603) for the safe operation of manned submersible craft. They apply to all such craft operated commercially in United Kingdom waters or elsewhere when the craft is launched, recovered, operated or supported from, or comprises a United Kingdom ship.

The Regulations which came into force on 1 October 1987 impose operational safety requirements and provide for the reporting of casualties and other accidents which may occur in the course of such operations.

In particular the Regulations:

- (1) Lay duties on the owner of the submersible craft relating to the provision of the necessary equipment and an Operations Manual detailing the procedures to be followed in submersible operations and on the master of the parent craft in ensuring that the operations are carried on from a safe place and in a safe manner.
- (2) Provide for the appointment of an Operations Controller to exercise immediate control of the submersible operations, for ensuring the maintenance of log books, and for ensuring that the submersible pilot is familiar with the operational and emergency procedures and is fully briefed as to the mission and on the anticipated environmental conditions during the mission.
- (3) Require the submersible craft pilot to be competent to command that particular type of submersible craft and that all submersible crew hold a current medical certificate.
- (4) Introduction requirements relating to casualties involving submersible craft and confer on the Secretary of State the power to direct an inspector to investigate such casualties.

The Association of Offshore Diving Contractors (AODC) has drawn up a Code of Practice for the Operation of Manned Submersible Craft (1984) which has been accepted by the Department and where appropriate submersible operations carried out in accordance with this Code can be expected to meet the relevant requirements of the Regulations. Copies of this Code of Practice can be obtained from the AODC, 28/30 Little Russell Street, London WC1A 2HN. The Department of Transport is prepared to consider and, if appropriate, accept other Codes of Practice for Operations of Submersible Craft.

Attention is drawn to existing Regulations concerning manned submersible craft – (a) The Merchant Shipping (Registration of Submersible Craft) Regulations 1976 and (b) The Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft Construction and Survey) Regulations 1981. These Regulations have now been amended by the Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 to bring certain definitions and other provisions into line with the Merchant Shipping (Submersible Craft Operations) Regulations 1987 (SI No. 311). In particular the definition of “submersible craft” now excludes diving bells (as defined); the application of the Regulations in connection with submersible craft used outside the United Kingdom or its territorial waters is revised; and there is an exclusion for submersible craft not used commercially.

The Regulations also introduce into the 1981 Regulations a requirement that submersible craft be equipped with medical stores.

Department of Transport
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London WC1V 6LP
November 1987

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