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## The Hovercraft Code

Notice to all Manufacturers, Owners, Masters and Surveyors of Hovercraft

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### Summary

This Marine Guidance Note introduces the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's Hovercraft Code. Hovercraft complying with the code are exempted from those parts of the High Speed Craft Regulations (HSC) and Hovercraft General Order requiring the hovercraft to be surveyed and certificated in line with the HSC Code and the British Hovercraft Safety Requirements (BHSRs)

### 1. Introduction/ Background

- 1.1 The Hovercraft Code has been developed for Light and Small hovercraft operating in the United Kingdom or United Kingdom Waters (both at sea and on inland waterways).
- 1.2 Currently all hovercraft used for reward must be built to the requirements of the High Speed Craft (HSC) Code. The Hovercraft Code introduces a voluntary set of standards appropriate for small commercial hovercraft, which are equivalent to the HSC requirements.
- 1.3 Where a hovercraft is surveyed and certificated under, and continues to comply with, this Code, it is exempted from those parts of the Hovercraft (General) Order 1972 and the Merchant Shipping (High Speed Craft) Regulations 2004 which require the hovercraft to be surveyed and certificated against the British Hovercraft Safety Requirements (BHSR) and the IMO High Speed Craft Code. The General Exemption is annexed to this MGN.

### 2. Application

- 2.1 The Hovercraft Code may be voluntarily applied, from the date of publication, to Small Hovercraft, which are those under 24m in length hard structure and carrying no more than 12 passengers and no more than 15 persons in total.
- 2.2 The Code also provides standards for Light Hovercraft, a sub set of Small Hovercraft further limited to hovercraft that are less than 1,000kg unladen weight, less than 12m in length and carrying no more than 8 persons in total.



- 2.3 Light Hovercraft used for Reward but deemed not to be “engaged in navigation” because of their tightly constrained operations may come under the definition Ultra-Light Hovercraft.
- 2.4 The Hovercraft Code provides standards for Ultra-Light Hovercraft which are of less than 500kg unladen weight, carrying a crew of not more than 4 and no passengers or cargo (other than activity related equipment)
- 2.5 The Code also provides standards which, in opinion of the industry working group, may be appropriate for operators to select to use for Ultra-Light Hovercraft being used as “Work Equipment” under the terms of the Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (SI 1998 No 2306)
- 2.6 Large Hovercraft of 24 metres length and over or any other craft carrying more than 12 passengers, including Light and Small craft, fall outside the scope of this Code and are covered under the Merchant Shipping (High Speed Craft) Regulations 2004.
- 2.7 Independent Rescue Boat organisations using hovercraft for commercial purposes should use the Rescue Boat Code for all aspects of Survey and Certification, but they may use the technical standards of this code relevant to the hovercraft type.
- 2.8 Light Hovercraft (those below 1,000kg unladen weight), not used for reward need not comply with the requirements for registration or certification.
- 2.9 The Hovercraft Code may be found here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-hovercraft-code-of-practice-cop-23>



### **More Information**

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File Ref: MS8/19/01

Published: 9 December 2015  
Please note that all addresses and  
telephone numbers are correct at time of publishing

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Maritime &  
Coastguard  
Agency

## GENERAL EXEMPTION

### Small Hovercraft

The Secretary of State, in exercise of his powers under the regulations listed in Column 1 and Column 2 of the Schedule, and being satisfied, in the case of the Merchant Shipping (High Speed Craft) regulations 2004 as to the matters set out in regulation 4(1) thereof, hereby exempts small hovercraft (as defined below) from the requirements of the regulations listed in Column 1 and Column 3 of the Schedule in so far as they would be applicable to it. This Exemption is subject to the following conditions –

- (a) that the hovercraft is surveyed and certified as a Light or Small Hovercraft in compliance with, and the vessel complies in full with, the Hovercraft Code, issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, an executive agency of the United Kingdom Department of Transport.
- (b) that the craft operates only –
  - (i) for Small hovercraft less than 24m in length and no more than 12 passengers and not more than 15 persons in total within a limit of UK area Category 2 waters as defined in the Hovercraft Code ; or
  - (ii) for Light Hovercraft of less than 12m in length and no more than 8 persons on board within a limit of UK area Category 3 waters as defined in the Hovercraft Code; or
  - (iii) for Ultra-Light Hovercraft within a limit of UK area Category 6 waters as defined in the hovercraft code further restricted to no more than 0.5 miles from the shore or in areas which are not capable of being navigated by a conventional ship within 3 miles of a safe landing place or within one mile of an appropriately certified support boat, in favourable weather and in daylight with a maximum significant wave height of 0.3m ; or
  - (iv) in accordance with any other restrictions defined on the Certificate or Permit to Operate.
- (c) The owner and master of the craft shall ensure that there is not on board a greater number of passengers or total persons than that stated in Condition (b) of this Exemption Certificate.
- (d) that the craft operates within any restricted periods defined on the Certificate or Permit to Operate.

This exemption has effect from 10 December 2015 and, subject to consultation and reasonable notice, shall remain effective until amended or revoked.

Issued at Southampton

Dated this 10 day of December 2015



Chris Thomas  
Director of Maritime Safety and Standards  
For the Secretary of State

## SCHEDULE

<b>Column 1</b> <b>Name of Regulation</b>	<b>Column 2</b> <b>Power to Exempt</b>	<b>Column 3</b> <b>Regulations Exempted</b>
The Hovercraft (General) Order 1972 (SI 1972/674), as amended	Reg 32	Part II ( Reg 7A-17), Part III( Regs. 17A – 23)
The Merchant Shipping (High Speed Craft) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/302), as amended	Reg 4	Regs 6- 7A

