



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

MARINE GUIDANCE NOTE

MGN 532 (M) Amendment 4

Safe movement on board ship

Notice to all shipowners, operators and managers and other employers of seafarers, masters, officers and seafarers.

This notice should be read in conjunction with the Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997 (S.I 1997/2962), the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COSWP) Chapter 11 and replaces MGN 532 (M) amendment 3.

Summary

This notice gives guidance on the measures that shipowners and employers are expected to take in order to provide for safe movement on board UK ships.

Providing for safe movement on board ship is an integral part of ensuring a safe working environment on board, as required by the Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997, regulation 5(2)(e).

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency considers that compliance with this notice will generally demonstrate that the shipowner or employer has done what is reasonably practicable to comply with the duty to ensure a safe working environment on board ship. Where alternative measures are taken to provide for safe movement, the shipowner or employer will be expected to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of MCA, that these alternative measures provide at least an equivalent level of safety in the operating conditions concerned.

If the measures in this notice are not complied with, and no measures which MCA agrees are equivalent are in place, MCA will take enforcement action under the Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997.

Amendment 4 updates references and minor editorials only.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997 place a duty on the employer to ensure the health and safety of workers and other persons so far as is reasonably practicable. That duty extends to provision and maintenance of an environment for persons aboard ship that is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risk to health.

1.2 Providing for safe movement on board ship is considered to be an integral part of that duty. The duty is placed on the shipowner, the employer and any other person “in control of the matter”, which - in respect of day-to-day management of the ship - will include the master.

2. Basic requirements

2.1 The shipowner and the master should ensure that safe means of access is provided and maintained to any place on the ship to which a person may be expected to go. This includes accommodation areas, and passenger areas. See COSWP chapter 11 safe movement on board ship.

2.2 All deck surfaces used for transit about the ship, and all passageways, walkways and stairs should be properly maintained and kept free from material or substances liable to cause a person to slip or fall.

2.3 All transit areas and working areas, including areas used for loading and unloading of cargo, should be adequately and appropriately lit. COSWP section 11.4 and annex 11.2 for further information on lighting levels.

2.4 Safety signs should be used where appropriate to give health and safety information. (See MGN 556(M+F) amendment 2 and COSWP Chapter 9).

2.5 Secure guards or fencing should be fitted around any opening, open hatchway or dangerous edge into, through or over which a person may fall. This must be of adequate design and construction for the purpose. If the opening is a permanent access way, or work is in progress which cannot be carried out while the guard are in place, this requirement does not apply. However, any hazard should be clearly marked. COSWP section 11.5 gives further guidance on guardrails.

3. Ladders

3.1 All ship's ladders should be of good construction and sound material, of adequate strength for the purpose they are to be used, free from patent defect and properly maintained.

3.2 Ladders providing access to the ship's hold should comply with the requirements in COSWP chapter 11, annex 11.1 which gives standards for hold access.

4. Movement of vehicles

4.1 Only a competent person, authorised to do so, should drive any powered ship's vehicle or mobile lifting appliances in the course of their work. Risks arising from use or movement of such vehicles or appliances should be assessed and measures put in place to ensure the safety of those driving or using them, and others.

4.2 Further guidance is in COSWP section 11.8.

5. Further guidance

5.1 COSWP Chapter 11 and Annex 11.1 – 11.2 gives further guidance on safe movement on board ship, including watertight doors, working on deck and adverse weather. Chapter 31, ships serving offshore oil and gas installations, section 31.15.6 also has guidance on what precautions to take when heavy weather is expected.

More information

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