



SOLAS AMENDMENT NEW REGULATION AFFECTING LIFTING APPLIANCES

FROM 1 JANUARY 2026, THE NEW SOLAS REGULATION II 1/3 13, TITLED “LIFTING APPLIANCES AND ANCHOR HANDLING WINCHES”, ENTERED INTO FORCE. THIS REGULATION INTRODUCES NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR LIFTING APPLIANCES INSTALLED ON MOST NEWLY BUILT AND EXISTING SHIPS, INCLUDING COMMON EQUIPMENT SUCH AS STORES AND ENGINE ROOM CRANES. WHILE ANCHOR HANDLING WINCHES APPLY ONLY TO A SPECIFIC SECTOR OF SHIPPING, THE LIFTING APPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS HAVE BROAD APPLICABILITY ACROSS THE INDUSTRY.

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MSC.1/Circ.1663 “Guidelines for lifting appliances”, clarifies the interpretation and application of the new regulation for lifting appliances.

The regulation applies to all lifting appliances and any loose gear utilised with the lifting appliances. There are some notable occasions where the regulation does not apply, generally where other regulations or standards take primacy, such as lifesaving appliances complying with the Life-Saving Appliance (LSA) code.

Where lifting appliances have a safe working load (SWL) less than 1,000kg, the extent of compliance with the guidelines will be at the discretion of a ship’s flag state.

The new regulation covers issues such as the design and installation of lifting appliances and loose gear, ongoing maintenance and inspection after installation, and operational considerations.

INSTALLATION AND TESTING

A lifting appliance installed on or after 1 January 2026 shall be designed, constructed and installed to the satisfaction of the ship’s flag state. Most commonly, this will be to the standards of an acceptable classification society. The lifting appliance must be load tested and thoroughly examined before being used for the first time. The SWL must also be permanently marked, matching the proven and documented load limits.

A lifting appliance installed before 1 January 2026 shall be load tested and thoroughly examined no later than the date of the first renewal survey on/after the 1 January 2026. It must also meet the requirement for permanent SWL marking by this date.

All loose gear in use with lifting appliances shall be designed and constructed to the satisfaction of the ships flag state, with certification supplied to show adequate proof testing. The loose gear should be marked with a unique identifier, the SWL, and any other markings required for safe use.

ONGOING COMPLIANCE

All lifting appliances, regardless of date of installation, must have a load test after repairs, modifications, or alterations of a major character, and at least once every five years.

In addition to load testing, each lifting appliance must have a thorough examination after each load test, and annually.

Loose gear should be subject to a proof test after repairs, modifications, or alterations of a major character. The gear should also have a thorough examination after each proof test, and annually.

All load testing and thorough examinations are to be conducted under the supervision of a ‘Competent Person’. As defined in the guidelines, this individual is required to possess sufficient knowledge and experience to achieve approval by the ship’s flag state. In practical terms this will generally be a classification society or vendor approved by the ship’s flag state.

All lifting appliances that are compliant with the guidelines are to be recorded in the ship specific “Register of Ship’s Lifting Appliances and Cargo Handling Gear”. Certificates of test and thorough examination for lifting appliances and loose gear should also be attached to this register.

INOPERATIVE LIFTING APPLIANCES AND GEAR

When a lifting appliance or loose gear is found to be non-compliant, then it must not be used until the deficiency is rectified to the satisfaction of a competent person. For lifting appliances, they should be clearly labelled showing their inoperative status and locked in place, or isolated from their source of power as appropriate. Loose gear should be clearly marked as inoperative and placed in a designated quarantine area. The details of any inoperative equipment should be recorded in the register of lifting appliances until rectified or disposed of as appropriate.

MAINTENANCE

All maintenance activities must be carried out under the supervision of a ‘Responsible Person’. As defined in the guidelines, this individual is appointed by the master or the company and must possess sufficient knowledge and experience regarding the maintenance, inspection, and operation of onboard lifting appliances and associated gear.

Each lifting appliance must have a manufacturer provided maintenance manual. The guidelines specify the minimum required contents of these manuals, such as maintenance schedules, repair instructions, spare parts lists, and test procedures.

For both lifting appliances and loose gear, the guidelines identify key focus areas for inspection, particularly components vulnerable to corrosion, damage, or failure, including safety critical features that must be regularly checked.

Comprehensive records of all inspections and maintenance must be maintained and kept on board. These records may be documented in any suitable format, such as the ship’s planned maintenance system, but must include all necessary details, be clearly legible, and be authenticated by a ‘Responsible Person’.

OPERATIONS

The guidelines outline operational requirements for lifting appliances. Personnel operating the lifting appliance must be appropriately qualified and trained, and all lifting operations should be planned and risk assessed.

Manufacturers must provide an operations manual for each lifting appliance that includes as a minimum:

1. Design, operational, and environmental limitations;
2. Details of compatible loose gear;
3. Safety instructions; and
4. Operating procedures, including any special procedures.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION MANUAL CREATION

It is recognised that not all information may be available for older lifting appliances installed before 1 January 2026, and in some cases the manufacturer may no longer trade. The guidelines therefore allow for the use of competent third parties to create the operations and maintenance manuals as necessary.

Whilst this new SOLAS regulation formalises the practices and procedures already followed by many shipowners; it may require some modification to some company safety management systems and shipboard operations. We therefore recommend scrutiny of the IMO guidelines, and early liaison with your classification society or approved competent person as required to avoid any unnecessary delay to meeting compliance.