

Government proposes amendments to update regulations on merchant shipping for compliance with international standards

â€‹The Government gazetted today (May 23) nine amendment regulations to amend relevant regulations under the Merchant Shipping (Safety) Ordinance (Cap. 369), the Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Ordinance (Cap. 413), and the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance (Cap. 548), to incorporate into local legislation the latest relevant requirements of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974; the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004; and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

The nine regulations to be amended are:

- (a) Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Grain) Regulations (Cap. 369AA);
- (b) Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Navigational Equipment and Safety of Navigation) Regulation (Cap. 369BA);
- (c) Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Construction and Survey) Regulation (Cap. 369BD);
- (d) Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Fire-fighting Appliances and Fire Protection) Regulation (Cap. 369BE);
- (e) Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Ships Operating in Polar Waters) Regulation (Cap. 369BF);
- (f) Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (General) Regulation (Cap. 548F);
- (g) Merchant Shipping (Reporting of Pollution Incidents) Regulations (Cap. 413C);
- (h) Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution) Regulation (Cap. 413P);
- and
- (i) Merchant Shipping (Control of Ballast Water and Sediments) Regulation (Cap. 413Q).

The proposed amendments include new requirements related to the safe carriage of bulk grains in specially suitable compartments; reporting of loss of freight container(s), including those containing harmful substances in packaged form, from a ship or observation of freight container(s) drifting at sea; design, construction, installation and testing etc of shipboard lifting appliances, anchor handling winches and their utilised loose gear; prevention of fire and explosion, suppression of fire and special requirements for the protection of specific spaces; safe navigation and voyage planning for specific types of vessels when operating in polar waters; classification, labelling, packing and documentation of dangerous goods in packaged form carried by sea; provision of bunker delivery notes for the bunkering of low-flashpoint fuels and gas fuels, and approval of electronic Ballast Water

Record Books and verification of the entries therein, etc.

A spokesman for the Transport and Logistics Bureau said, "As an Associate Member of the IMO, Hong Kong is committed to fulfilling our responsibilities to support the protection of the marine environment and the prevention of pollution, as well as to promote safe navigation. The proposed legislative amendments will keep our local laws up to date and in line with international standards on those fronts."

The Panel on Economic Development of the Legislative Council, the Hong Kong Fleet Operation Advisory Committee and the Local Vessels Advisory Committee of the Marine Department, as well as local fuel oil suppliers, have been consulted on the legislative proposals. The amendments were supported.

The proposed amendment regulations will be tabled at the Legislative Council for negative vetting on May 28.