

Liferafts

There are a number of international organisations which offer “sea-goers” guides, standards and regulations covering various aspects of boat construction and equipment safety. Why international? Quite simply, boats sail across borders and so it is wise to address international standards rather than apply British standards which, like driving on the left side of the road, might not be acceptable overseas.

The international organisations involved are:

- IMO – the International Marine Organisation,
- ISAF – the International Sailing Federation (the ORC was subsumed into ISAF in 2004)
- ISO – the International Standards Organisation.

IMO

This UN agency deals primarily with the safety of shipping. The International Convention for the

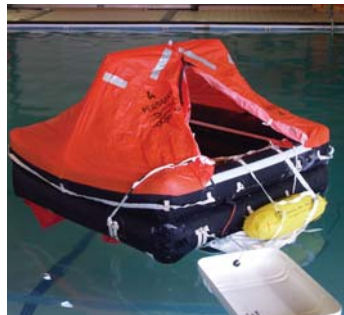
Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), which gives standards for liferafts, is adopted by IMO and, although drafted for vessels of over 24 metres in length, includes many design features equally applicable to smaller craft, especially if these are ocean going. The MCA SCV codes require category 0 vessels to carry IMO SOLAS liferafts as do the ISAF safety recommendations for trans-oceanic races, special regulations category 0 races.

But SOLAS liferafts, are often considered too heavy, bulky and over-engineered for use with small powerboats and yachts. For this reason, ISAF developed and specified its own liferaft standards for use in long distance and well offshore races.

ISAF

The ISAF liferaft is the most commonly carried raft on board recreational craft. The current

specification, known as the Appendix A, Part 2 liferaft came into effect at the beginning of 2003. Rafts built to this specification are arguably the most suitable to be carried by any boat going offshore (but not trans-oceanic) for relatively short periods of time. **If you intend buying a new raft for this type of use, make sure it is to the new ISAF Appendix A, Part 2 specification, not the earlier (ORC or RORC) design.**



ISO

The International Standards Organisation issued two liferaft standards during 2005. One of these has since been accepted by the ISAF as an equivalent, subject to some caveats, in particular the need for the raft to have a “boarding ramp”. Details of this equivalent are contained in the ISAF regulations as follows:

ISO 9650 Part 1 Type I Group A (ISO) when each liferaft shall contain at least a Pack 2 (<24h) and:-

- shall have a semi-rigid boarding ramp, and*
- shall be so arranged that any high-pressure hose shall not impede the boarding process, and*
- shall have a topping-up means provided for any inflatable boarding ramp, and*
- when the liferaft is designed with a single ballast pocket this shall be accepted provided the liferaft otherwise complies with ISO*

9650 and meets a suitable test of ballast pocket strength devised by the manufacturer and
(v) compliance with OSR 4.20.2 (d) i-v shall be indicated on the liferaft certificate.

MCA Small Commercial Vessel Codes

The latest MCA recommendations for small commercial vessels (SCV), MGN 280, are that new liferafts for category 0 and 1 vessels should be to SOLAS standard, Wheelmarked or DfT approved. Category 2, 3, 4 and 5 vessels shall be as for category 0 and 1 or to ISAF Appendix A, Part 2 (which includes ISO). The RYA applies this recommendation to vessels being newly coded as it believes it to be in the best interests of safety.

The former MCA Codes, prior to the issue of MGN 280, reference the older ORC liferaft as still acceptable for vessels already coded for categories 2, 3, 4 and 5. These will remain valid until the end of their serviceable life. It is also currently the case that a vessel may still be coded afresh under the old codes and can therefore apply the older code requirements for liferafts and hence the lesser standard. The RYA will code a vessel accordingly but in such cases it will apply all of the requirements of the older code and may only issue a certificate after receipt of a signed declaration from the owner or agent as to the vessel being equipped with the lesser standard specification liferaft(s).

For more details or a copy of the declaration please email the RYA Technical Department at technical@rya.org.uk.

Electronic chart plotter FAQs

To help you with any problems with the chart plotter, FAQs are posted on the web.

Please see the shorebased instructors section of www.rya.org.uk/WorkingWithUs/instructors/instructorresources

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