



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



Regulations and Recommendations Form to Address Fires on Vessels

Members of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Formal Safety Assessment (FSA) Experts Group recently met over four days in London to advance regulatory work concerning the detection and control of cargo fires onboard containerships.

To assist the development of relevant amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) or new regulations, the meeting reportedly considered the “CARGOSAFE” study commissioned by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).



“The study examines the risks associated with fires in cargo spaces on containerships and evaluates measures to control these risks in terms of prevention, detection, firefighting and containment,” advised an IMO statement.

“The study follows the FSA structure for use in IMO rule-making process, based on the Revised Guidelines for Formal Safety Assessment (FSA) for use in the IMO rule-making process (MSC MEPC.2/Circ.12/Rev.2). The experts have been evaluating whether the CARGOSAFE study has been conducted in accordance with the Revised FSA Guidelines.

“A report from the group will be submitted to the Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment (SSE), which meets for its tenth session from 4-8 March 2024.”

The work follows a number of incidents involving fires on containerships and subsequent submissions to the IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) proposing a new agenda item on the matter.

“The MSC agreed to include in the agenda of the SSE Sub-Committee, a new item on ‘Development of amendments to SOLAS chapter II-2 and the FSS Code concerning detection and control of fires in cargo holds and on the cargo deck of containerships’, with a target completion year of 2025, in association with the Sub-Committee on Carriage of Cargoes and Containers (CCC) as and when requested by the SSE Sub-Committee.

“The expected next step would be to propose draft amendments to SOLAS chapter II-2 and the Fires Safety Systems (FSS) Code, based on the suggested risk control options and other submissions and proposals.”

AMSA BEVs Advice

Meanwhile, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has issued “DCV Safety Alert 02/2023 – Risks Associated with the Carriage of Battery Electric Vehicles”.

The safety alert provides guidance to operators of domestic commercial vessels (DCVs) on risks associated with the carriage of battery-powered electric vehicles (BEVs) on roll-on, roll-off (roro) ferries, and how best to deal with those risks.

Identified risks associated with BEV fires onboard DCVs were noted to include:

- high-voltage shocks
- direct jet flames
- fires develop in intensity quickly and rapidly reach their maximum intensity (typically within two-three minutes)
- toxic gases
- gas explosion (if the released gas accumulates for a while before being ignited)
- long-lasting re-ignition risk (with ignition or re-ignition weeks, or possibly months after the provoking incident)
- once established, fires are difficult to stop/extinguish
- thermal runaway

A well as providing a section of “further considerations”, the notice included a dozen recommendations to assist each DCV operator undertake their regulatory-required risk assessment relating to the carriage of BEVs.

December 2023

