

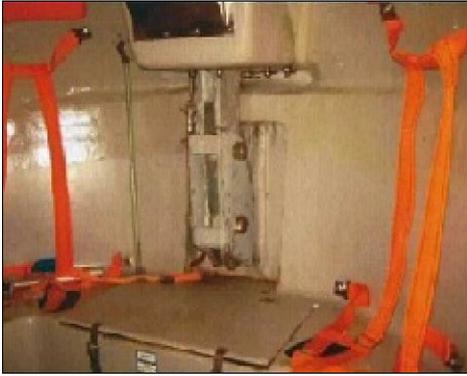
Circular 18 / 2010**To: All Shipowners, Managers, Lifeboat Manufacturers and Lifeboat Maintenance Service Providers, Deputy Registrars, Surveyors and Other Interested Parties****Subject: Lifeboats – Fixed Structural Connections of Release Mechanisms****Date: 13 May 2010**

SOLAS Chapter III, Regulation 20.3 requires maintenance, testing and inspections to be carried out in a manner which will ensure the reliability of lifesaving and launching appliances. Regulations 20.6, 20.7 and 20.11 require shipowners' representatives to conduct weekly, monthly and annual examinations of lifesaving appliances and launching appliances to confirm that they are fit for purpose. There is a requirement to check the condition of lifeboat structure, which includes the condition of the fixed structural connections of lifeboat release mechanisms, and our records show that this area can be prone to wastage, as the photograph below illustrates.



In addition, we are increasingly seeing fixed structural connections where the forward release hook mechanism is attached to the lifeboat stem. In these cases, a pedestal is attached to the release hook foundation plate for the gripping wire. There has been a recent example of this type of connection failing in service due to a number of factors, including mechanical damage and poor maintenance. Examples of external and internal arrangements are pictured below.





For freefall lifeboats, the area around the release hook should also be checked for damage. The photograph below shows how damage to the lifeboat has caused cracking of the GRP.



It is recommended that, at weekly, monthly and annual examinations, particular attention is paid to the following:

- Are the lifting straps wasted?
- Is there evidence of the fixing bolts moving in the foundation plates?
- Is there evidence of surface cracking in the GRP laminate?
- Do the release hook foundation plates remain a good fit and will they prevent the ingress of water under the fitting?
- Is there discolouration of the GRP structure in the areas around fixings?

After annual and five-yearly dynamic winch brake tests, is there evidence of any of the above deficiencies?