
Use of Halon for Fire Extinguishing on Board Ships

Guidance to Owners, Builders, Masters and Skippers of Ships and Fishing Vessels

This Note supersedes Marine Guidance Note 80

Summary

This Note advises all Owners, Builders, Masters and Skippers of Ships and Fishing Vessels of the phasing out of halon as a fire-extinguishing medium because of its damaging effect on the stratospheric ozone layer.

1. The use of halon in new fire fighting equipment on board ships was banned because of its damaging effect on the stratospheric ozone layer.
2. The Safety of Life at Sea 74 (SOLAS 74) prohibited the installation of new fixed or portable systems in all ships from 1 October 1994.
3. EC Regulation 2037/2000, which also addresses halons in existing installations, states that in fire protection systems, recovered, recycled or reclaimed halons may be used to replenish existing fire protection systems until 31 December 2002. After this date, systems cannot be re-filled. Mandatory decommissioning of fire protection systems and fire extinguishers containing halons must be carried out and completed by 31 December 2003. The only exemptions to this requirement are a number of critical uses contained in annex VII of the Regulation. These critical uses will be for a limited duration however owners with special circumstances who feel they fall within the critical use annex should contact the Agency for advice.
4. The production of halon (other than for critical uses) in developed countries ceased at the end of 1993. The reduced availability of halon and of maintenance support services means it is likely to become progressively more difficult and costly to support.
5. In light of these circumstances, shipowners with existing halon systems should take timely action to ensure compliance with EU Regulation 2037/2000. When ships are scrapped or systems replaced, the stock of halon must not be released into the atmosphere but properly disposed of.
6. To facilitate the recycling of excess stock, the Halon Users National Consortium (HUNC) Limited has been formed. This is a joint venture between halon users and the fire industry, operating on a non-profit making basis and funded by members' subscriptions. It offers:
 - a clearing house service for sales of used halons;
 - provision of lists of companies who will recycle used halons to a recognised specification;
 - advice on the safe handling and disposal of halons; and
 - a link between UK users and halon banks in other countries.

7. Further information with regard to HUNC can be obtained from:

Halon Users National Consortium Ltd
Global House
College Street
Petersfield
Hampshire
GU31 4AD
Telephone: 01730 264040
Fax: 01730 269042

The International Maritime Organisation has provided information on alternative arrangements for Halon fire-extinguishing Systems in machinery spaces and pump rooms in MSC/Circ.668 dated 30 December 1994.

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