

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Coast Guard

USCG-2012-0848

Lifesaving and Fire-fighting Equipment, Training and Drills
On Board Offshore Facilities and Mobile Offshore Drilling
Units (MODUs) Operating on the U.S. Outer Continental
Shelf.

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DHS.

ACTION: Notice of Recommended Interim Voluntary Guidance
with Request for Comments.

SUMMARY: As part of its continuing response to the
explosion, fire and sinking of the MODU DEEPWATER HORIZON,
in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010, with loss of life,
the Coast Guard announces recommended interim voluntary
guidance concerning lifesaving and fire-fighting equipment,
training and drills on board offshore facilities and MODUs
operating on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), and
requests comments on that guidance. Comments received on
the docket will be considered in our ongoing evaluation of
the safety of offshore facilities.

DATES: The policy on recommended guidance described in
this notice is effective [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE

FEDERAL REGISTER]. Comments and related materials must reach the Docket Management Facility by [INSERT DATE 90 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER] ADDRESSES: You may submit comments identified by docket number USCG-2012-0848 using any one of the following methods. To avoid duplication, please use only one of these four methods:

(1) Federal eRulemaking Portal:

<http://www.regulations.gov>.

(2) Fax: 202-493-2251.

(3) Mail: Docket Management Facility (M-30), U.S. Department of Transportation, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590-0001.

(4) Hand delivery: Same as mail address above, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The telephone number is 202-366-9329.

To avoid duplication, please use only one of these four methods. See the "Public Participation" portion of the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section below for instructions on submitting comments.

Documents mentioned as being available in the docket are part of docket USCG-2012-0848 and are available for inspection or copying at the Docket Management Facility (M-

30), U.S. Department of Transportation, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also find this docket on the Internet by going to <http://www.regulations.gov>, inserting USCG-2012-0848 in the "Keyword" box, and then clicking "Search."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions on this notice, call or e-mail Mr. Randall Eberly, U.S. Coast Guard, Office of Design and Engineering Standards, Lifesaving and Fire Safety Division (CG-ENG-4), telephone (202) 372-1393, e-mail Randall.Eberly@uscg.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Public Participation

You may submit comments and related material regarding whether this recommended interim voluntary guidance should be incorporated into future rulemaking documents concerning lifesaving and fire-fighting equipment, training and drills on board offshore facilities and MODUs operating on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. All comments received will be posted, without change, to <http://www.regulations.gov> and will include any personal information you have provided.

Submitting comments: If you submit a comment, please

include the docket number for this notice (USCG-2012-0848) and provide a reason for each suggestion or recommendation. You may submit your comments and material online or by fax, mail or hand delivery, but please use only one of these means. We recommend that you include your name and a mailing address, an e-mail address, or a telephone number in the body of your document so that we can contact you if we have questions regarding your submission.

To submit your comment online, go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and insert "USCG-2012-0848" in the "Search" box. Click "Search," find this notice in the list of Results, and then click on the corresponding "Comment Now" box. If you submit your comments by mail or hand delivery, submit them in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. If you submit comments by mail and would like to know that they reached the Facility, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope. We will consider all comments and material received during the comment period.

Viewing the comments: To view comments, as well as documents mentioned in this notice as being available in the docket, go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and insert "USCG-2012-0848" in the "Search" box. Click "Search" and

use the filters on the left side of the page to highlight "Public Submissions" or other document types. If you do not have access to the Internet, you may view the docket online by visiting the Docket Management Facility in Room W12-140 on the ground floor of the Department of Transportation West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. We have an agreement with the Department of Transportation to use the Docket Management Facility.

Privacy Act: Anyone can search the electronic form of comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review a Privacy Act system of records notice regarding our public dockets in the January 17, 2008, issue of the Federal Register (73 FR 3316).

II. Background

The Report of Investigation into the Circumstances Surrounding the Explosion, Fire, Sinking and Loss of Eleven Crew Members Aboard the Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit DEEPWATER HORIZON in the Gulf of Mexico, April 20-22, 2010, and related Commandant's Final Action Memo, dated September

9, 2011, (hereinafter referred to as "Report") contain a number of recommendations for OCS safety improvements that are presently being evaluated for further regulatory action. (These documents may be found in the docket for this action, as indicated under ADDRESSES). The complexity of these recommendations necessitates further study in many areas. However, the Coast Guard believes that there is already ample evidence that the five recommendations discussed below could yield significant safety improvements, and urges operators of MODUs and offshore facilities to consider voluntary compliance with these items, as applicable.

(a) Fixed deluge systems for drill floor protection
(Recommendation 2D)

The Report recommended that a fixed deluge system or multiple high capacity water monitors should be installed for the protection of the drill floor and adjacent areas, with consideration given to requiring automatic operation upon gas detection.

The Coast Guard is considering proposing requirements for installation of such systems, since it is believed that in some circumstances, early employment of a deluge or monitor spray system during a drilling mishap could serve to

prevent or delay ignition of an uncontrolled release of product and/or mitigate the effects of ignition.

(b) Carrying capacity of lifeboats (Recommendation 3C)

The Report recommended that the Commandant work to amend the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Life-Saving Appliance Code (LSA Code) and its associated testing recommendations to ensure the adequacy of lifesaving appliance standards. In particular, the minimum average occupant weight of 165 or 181.5 lbs presently used to determine the carrying capacity of lifeboats is not considered representative of the weight of average offshore workers on the U.S. OCS, and thus lifeboat embarkation and evacuation could be hampered in an emergency due to occupant size.

The Coast Guard believes the existing requirements in the LSA Code, and associated Coast Guard type approval standards, are adequate for most applications subject to IMO requirements. Nevertheless, they are minimums. The number of requests the Coast Guard has received from offshore operators for approval of lifeboats designed to accommodate offshore workers larger than the average population is consistent with the Report's conclusion that current lifeboat design and testing requirements are not adequate for the physical build of the average offshore worker today. The Coast Guard is

therefore considering proposing requirements for higher average occupant weight and size standards specifically for lifeboats used on MODUs and offshore facilities.

(c) Training in the deployment of davit-launched liferafts (Recommendation 3D)

The Report recommended that the Commandant clarify 46 CFR 109.213(g)(5), which requires that where such equipment is provided, onboard training in the use of davit-launched liferafts take place at intervals of not more than 4 months, and that "whenever practicable", this include the inflation and lowering of a liferaft.

To promote hands-on familiarity with davit-launched liferaft operations, the Coast Guard is considering proposing requirements for drills to include the inflation and lowering of davit-launched liferafts at specified intervals. The current requirement to inflate and deploy a liferaft "whenever practicable" potentially allows for indefinite deferral of this important training. To clarify, an excess training liferaft (which need not be maintained in a fully equipped and operational condition) may be carried for this purpose, or the drills may be timed to coordinate with scheduled service of a required liferaft.

(d) Carriage of dedicated rescue boats (Recommendation 3J)

The Report recommended that the Commandant work with IMO to amend the Code for the Construction and Equipment of Mobile Offshore Drilling Units (MODU Code) to prohibit the dual purpose acceptance of life boats as rescue boats on MODUs.

The Coast Guard believes totally enclosed lifeboats are not well suited for use as rescue boats on MODUs and offshore facilities, and is considering changing the regulations that permit this practice. When a dual purpose life/rescue boat is fully loaded and being used as a survival craft, it is not available for use as a rescue boat, and vice versa. Rescue boats are primarily intended to marshal liferafts, and for man overboard situations. However, on MODUs and offshore facilities, lifeboats can be difficult or impossible to safely recover in anything but the most benign conditions due to the air gap and the lack of a ship's side to potentially provide a lee.

(e) Quarterly man overboard drills (Recommendation 3M)

The Report recommended 46 CFR 109.213 be amended to require performance of a man overboard drill on at least a quarterly basis.

The Coast Guard agrees that 46 CFR 109.213, as well as the relevant OCS Activities regulations in 33 CFR Subchapter N, should include such requirements, and is

considering proposing requirements for quarterly drills including deployment of the MODU's or facility's rescue boat, where provided, to simulate retrieval of persons in the water.

III. Interim Voluntary Guidance

As an interim measure, pending the regulatory actions discussed above, owner/operators of MODUs and manned offshore facilities operating on the U.S. OCS are urged to consider voluntary compliance with the recommendations laid out below, to the extent appropriate and practicable.

(a) Fixed deluge systems for drill floor protection

It is recommended that fixed water spray systems providing a minimum water application rate of at least 0.50 gpm/ft² over critical drill floor equipment, structural components and enclosure fire barriers should be considered. If fixed monitors are used as an alternative measure, at least two dual purpose fixed monitors, each with a minimum flow rate and pressure of 500 gpm at 100 psi should be considered. The monitors should be arranged for remote operation, or local manual operation from a protected location not likely to be cut off during a fire.

(b) Carrying capacity of lifeboats

Consideration should be given to specifying any new or replacement lifeboats on the basis of an occupant average

weight of at least 95 kg (210 lbs) per person (vs. the current standard of 82.5 kg (181.5 lbs)), with a seat width of 530 mm (21 inches) (vs. the current standard of 430 mm (17 inches)). A number of Coast Guard approved SOLAS lifeboats have already been approved to this standard by request of the customer(s), and are currently in use on OCS facilities.

(c) Training in the deployment of davit-launched liferafts

Where davit-launched liferafts are carried, consideration should be given to providing a training liferaft (which need not be maintained in a fully equipped and operational condition) for the MODU's or facility's personnel to practice the necessary steps to deploy onboard liferafts during abandon facility drills; including inflation of the raft, connection to the launching appliance, lowering, release and recovery of the liferaft. Alternatively, when liferafts become due for servicing, the MODU's or facility's personnel should be permitted to use them during drills for this purpose prior to being sent to a facility for servicing and repacking.

(d) Carriage of dedicated rescue boats

It is recommended that consideration should be given to supplying a dedicated approved SOLAS rescue boat (USCG approval series 160.156 or equivalent) and dedicated approved launching appliance on each existing MODU or

facility that currently uses a dual approved life/rescue boat to meet this requirement, and on new MODUs and facilities. For MODUs or facilities with a large air gap, operators should consider the improved launching and recovery capabilities of an approved fast rescue boat with a dedicated fast rescue boat launching appliance (which is equipped with motion damping and a constant tensioning winch).

(e) Quarterly man overboard drills

Consideration should be given to performing a man overboard drill on all MODUs and OCS facilities on at least a quarterly basis, including deployment of a rescue boat, where provided, to simulate the recovery of a person from the water.

IV. Authority

This document is issued under the authority of 5 U.S.C. 552(a), 43 U.S.C. 1331, et seq., and 33 CFR 1.05-1. The guidance contained in this notice is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is not intended to nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party. It represents the Coast Guard's current thinking on this topic and provides the public with

an indication of future action being considered by the
Coast Guard.

Dated:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J.G. Lantz". The signature is stylized and cursive.

J.G. Lantz,
Director of Commercial Regulations and Standards,
U.S. Coast Guard.