

MGN 258 (M+F)

DECOMMISSIONING OF HALON SYSTEMS

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

Summary

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

Information concerning Halon may also be found in MGN 191(M&F)

1. European Union (EU) Regulation 2037/2000 requires that all fire-fighting equipment in the EU containing halons must be decommissioned before 31/12/2003 and that the sale and use of halon including material that has been recovered or recycled is prohibited from 31/12/2002. The only exceptions to these requirements are contained in annex VII 'CRITICAL USES OF HALON'
2. Some confusion about decommissioning of halon systems has arisen because of a paragraph within annex VII (critical use of halon) which reads: -

"for the making inert of the occupied spaces where flammable liquid and/or gas release could occur in the military and oil, gas and petrochemical sector, and in existing cargo ships".
3. The Commission considers that the critical use in respect to existing cargo ships, relates to tankers and concerns the making inert of occupied spaces rather than fire fighting. As the MCA has never approved halon systems for inerting of occupied spaces it has not considered the critical use clause applicable.
4. As Regulation 2037/2000 is an EU and not an UK regulation the MCA has no authority to exempt or postpone its introduction. Therefore the present situation is that any EU company would be in breach of the EU regulation if they supplied halon to any flag vessel after 31/12/2002, and any EU flagged vessel would be in breach of the regulation if it retained a halon system after 31/12/2003.

Shipping Safety
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

Telephone 02380 329538
Fax 02380 329251
E- mail HQ_ShippingSafety@mcga.gov.uk
Website Internet: <http://www.mcga.gov.uk>

MS 010/055/0018
July 2003

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