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UNIFIED INTERPRETATIONS OF SOLAS REGULATION II-2/4.5.6.1, AND PARAGRAPHS 3.1.2, 3.1.4 AND 3.5.3 OF THE IBC CODE

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 109th session (2 to 6 December 2024), approved, with a view to providing more specific guidance for the application of the relevant requirements of chapter II-2 of the SOLAS Convention and the IBC Code, regarding cargo/vapour piping and related gas-freeing piping/ducts on tankers, unified interpretations (UIs) of SOLAS chapter II-2 and the IBC Code, prepared by the Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment at its tenth session (4 to 8 March 2024), as set out in the annex.

2 Member Governments are invited to use the annexed (UIs) as guidance when applying relevant provisions of SOLAS chapter II-2 and the IBC Code, and to bring them to the attention of all parties concerned.

3 This circular applies to the systems installed on or after 1 January 2026.

4 The expression *installed on or after 1 January 2026* means:

.1 for ships for which the building contract is placed on or after 1 January 2026, or in the absence of the contract, constructed on or after 1 January 2026, any installation date on the ship; or

.2 for ships other than those ships prescribed in .1 above, a contractual delivery date for the equipment or, in the absence of a contractual delivery date, the actual delivery date of the equipment to the ship on or after 1 January 2026.

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ANNEX

UNIFIED INTERPRETATIONS OF SOLAS REGULATION II-2/4.5.6.1 AND PARAGRAPHS 3.1.2, 3.1.4 AND 3.5.3 OF THE IBC CODE

All cargo piping (including cargo tank venting piping, relief valve discharge piping, cargo tank purging and gas-freeing piping/ducts), except those serving for inerting gas supply and for bow or stern loading and unloading arrangement, should be arranged within the cargo areas, as defined in SOLAS regulation II-2/3.6 and in paragraph 1.3.6 of the IBC Code. However, gasfreeing air-supply fan(s)/blower(s) and related air-supply piping/ducts may be located in- the forecastle area, outside of the cargo area, subject to the following paragraphs:

.1 the air-supply piping/ducts should not be permanently connected to cargo piping or cargo tank venting piping/ducts and additionally the following conditions in sub-paragraphs .1 to .5 should also be met:

.1 the connection should be made with detachable connections (e.g. spool pieces, detachable ducts/hoses, etc.) and two shut-off valves fitted as specified in sub-paragraph .2 below. Such detachable connections should be located within the cargo area;

.2 a non-return valve should be provided within the cargo area at the cargo side (i.e. between the said detachable connection and cargo tank(s)). A shut-off valve should be fitted at the fan/blower side (i.e. between the said detachable connection and the fan(s)/blower(s)), and another shut-off valve should be fitted at the cargo side (i.e. between the said detachable connection and cargo tank(s)). The shut-off valve at the cargo side may or may not be located after the non-return valve and therefore, a single non-return valve with a positive means of closure can be located between the said detachable connection and cargo tank(s) in lieu of the combination of the said non-return valve and shut-off valve at the cargo side;

.3 the shut-off valve at the fan/blower side should open after the air-supply fan(s)/blower(s) is/are started; this should be triggered/activated by the fan discharge pressure;

.4 the shut-off valve at the fan/blower side should automatically close when the air-supply fan(s)/blower(s) is/are stopped or in the event of- loss of gas freeing air pressure; and

.5 when the air-supply duct is arranged penetrating through the bulkhead facing the cargo area, the shut-off valve at the fan/blower side should be fitted directly on the bulkhead. This shut-off valve may or may not be located inside the fan/blower room. Alternatively, the shut-off valve at the fan/blower side may be fitted on the open deck apart from the bulkhead. In all cases, electrical parts (if any) of this shut-off valve should, if fitted in a hazardous area, be of certified safe type* for use in the concerned hazardous area (Zone 1 or Zone 2);

* Refer to IEC 60092-502:1999 Electrical Installations in Ships – Tankers.

.2 the part of the air-supply piping/duct from air intakes of the fan(s)/blower(s) till the shut-off valve at the fan/blower side, except the part necessary to extend into a hazardous area (depending on the location of this shut-off valve), should be arranged in a non-hazardous area. The air intakes for the gas-freeing fans/blowers should be located on the open deck and in a non-hazardous area;

.3 when not being used in gas-freeing operation, the said detachable connection should be dismantled, with all the openings closed with blank flanges; and a warning plate should be provided in the vicinity of each opening, stating "This opening is to be closed with a blank flange when not in gas-freeing operation";

.4 the air-supply fan(s)/blower(s), as well as the associated piping/ducts, should not be used for any other purpose;

.5 the air-supply fan(s)/blower(s) should be of the non-sparking type (see IACS unified requirement UR F29);

.6 electrical motor(s) driving the air-supply fan(s)/blower(s) should be of the explosionproof type when fitted in the duct or located- in the cargo area; and

.7 suitable and clear operational procedures should be provided stating, inter alia:

.1 the flexible hose, detachable duct or spool piece can only be connected and fixed to the piping/duct just or within 10 minutes before the gas-freeing operation; and

.2 the shut-off valves can only be opened after the air-supply fan(s)/blower(s) are put into operation and this action should be interlocked with the fan discharge pressure.