

M.S. Notice 1 of 1999

No. 19-NT(2)/99

Dated 10.3.1999

Subject : Problem with installation of Hydrostatic Release Units for liferafts

1. In the autumn of 1998 a fishing vessel sank in 10 mtrs of water in calm and clear weather only 2 nautical miles from her home port. Divers later found that the Hydrostatic Release Unit for the vessel's Life Raft had functioned correctly, but that the 'weak link' at the end of the painter had been incorrectly attached to the Life Raft lashing. The 'weak link' prevented the lashing from releasing the Life Raft. The Life Raft therefore did not float off to the surface to inflate as the vessel sank. The three crew members on board the fishing vessel, as a result, lost their lives.

2. After the incident, the authorities carried out an inspection campaign and it was found that a large percentage of Hydrostatic Release Units (HRUs) were wrongly installed and would not have functioned if the vessel sank. It was also observed that all HRUs were designed to the SOLAS standard and all had been delivered with standard installation instructions.

3. An information campaign on the procedure of installation of hydrostatic release units confirmed that there is a need for better instructions on how to install HRUs for Life Rafts. Based on the above, it is advised that instructions should be simple and should include illustrations in the language of the local users. It is also desirable that a waterproof sticker illustrating the installation of HRUs, attachable to the Life Raft container next to the release unit, should accompany the HRUs.

4. All Mercantile Marine Departments, Life Raft Servicing Stations, ship-owners, ship-masters & seafarers are to adhere to the above safety measure at the earliest so as to prevent further unfortunate incidents as mentioned above.

5. This issues with the approval of the Nautical Advisor to the Government of India.

Sd/-

(Capt. L.K.Panda)

Nautical Surveyor