

New safety rules for enclosed spaces on board vessels

Press release

Seafarers will be better protected as new UK rules come into force to tighten up safety for those who work in enclosed spaces on board vessels.



The updated legislation goes further than that currently required under international maritime law and is part of the ongoing commitment by the UK to seafarer welfare.

Enclosed spaces include chain lockers, cargo holds, duct keels and water tanks – or any area that has been left closed for any length of time without ventilation.

Six people have died over a ten-year period from 2009 to 2019 in UK ports while working in such spaces, which has led to this legislation being introduced. Although carrying out assignments in enclosed spaces is a necessary part of working on ships, the MCA is committed to reducing the risks and will continue to review how best to protect people in those environments.

The changes will replace previous legislation, requiring ships to protect workers from the risks of entry into enclosed spaces through measures such as regular safety drills and providing atmosphere testing equipment.

Given the serious risk to seafarers' health and safety, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency has also extended the new measures to a wider range of vessels than just those covered by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). Fishing vessels will now also be required to put in place safe systems of work for enclosed space entry.

The regulations come into force for vessels which come under SOLAS on 14 May 2022 while for all others it will apply from 14 May 2023. The dates have been chosen to give the ships for which the regulations are new the time to become compliant.

Katy Ware, Director of Maritime Services said:

We remain committed to protecting the safety of those who spend their lives working at sea. There is a serious risk to seafarers' health and safety by going into these enclosed spaces, even though it is sometimes a necessary part of their work and we want to do all we can to reduce the risks.

The risks from working in enclosed spaces are well known across the shipping world and all of us know that more needs to be done to reduce the number of fatalities. These regulations will replace and extend current legislation which will go right across the merchant sector.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has also published [MGN 659 \(M+F\) Entry into enclosed spaces](#), which further explains the requirements of the regulations, as well as publishing leaflets and posters (available free of charge from the webshop) to raise awareness of safe procedures for enclosed space entry.

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