

# Government Chemist contributes to food allergen guidance

News story

The GC team collaborated with experts to develop quantitative risk assessment guidance for food allergens



Selection of foods that can cause allergic reactions

## **Background**

Food allergen risk assessment (RA) is the use of information on the characteristics of unintended allergen presence in food to estimate the likelihood and nature of potential adverse effects experienced by consumers with food allergy, due to exposure in the consumed final product.

Quantitative risk assessment (QRA) of cross contamination by food allergens brings sharper focus to decision making in the subsequent risk management. This includes the interpretation of analytical findings, handling of potential food recalls and the management of precautionary allergen labelling. Allergen QRA exists in many different forms with different requirements placed on the risk assessor depending on the question that needs to be answered.

## **Published guidance**

Representing the Government Chemist, [Professor Michael Walker](#) is co-chair of an International Life Sciences Institute, European section, ILSI Europe Expert Group (EG) on food allergen QRA. The EG was created to attempt to achieve consensus on the methods needed for allergen QRAs by food business operators, and their implementation. An electronic workshop was held in October 2020 with representatives from a wide range of food allergy and allergen stakeholder groups. The workshop identified that a summary of current best in class guidance, identified gaps, potential improvements & harmonization of allergen QRA arising largely from cross contact would be

very beneficial.

The EG have now published an introduction to allergen QRA and an overview of inputs potentially needed for different QRA methods, when deemed feasible and necessary. The paper also introduces the EG.

Areas of focus include proactive assessments for food production under normal conditions, both in the upstream supply chain and in food production facilities, and reactive assessments as part of an allergen incident response. The paper offers insights into more detailed guidance for allergen QRA that will be published later in the year in open access as an ILSI Europe report.

The [paper is currently available as a pre-print](#).

Published 21 March 2022

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## [UK hosts NATO Multi-Domain Operations conference](#)

News story

Strategic Command and NATO Allied Command Transformation led discussions on the future of integrated military operations.



On 16-18 March, Strategic Command and NATO's Allied Command Transformation co-hosted the first-ever Multi-Domain Operations Conference in Oxford.

Multi-Domain Operations is about ensuring that military operations can be conducted seamlessly across all five warfighting domains – maritime, land, air, space, and cyberspace – and in a unified way with allies.

The conference gathered senior military representatives from NATO member nations, as well as experts from other government departments, industry, and academia.

General Sir Patrick Sanders, Commander of UK Strategic Command, said:

Being integrated with our NATO Allies has never been so important.

This conference was an excellent opportunity for Alliance members to unify our thinking on Multi-Domain Operations and the future of warfighting. We can't afford to get this wrong.

The UK was invited to host the conference so Alliance members could learn from the UK's approach to an integrated defence, a concept known as [Multi-Domain Integration](#).

Delegates at the conference had the opportunity to hear from experts on Multi-Domain Integration, digital enablement, and integrated training and culture.

Published 21 March 2022

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## [Ship safety: amendments to merchant shipping regulations](#)

I am making this statement for the purposes of paragraph 14 of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. The instrument to which this statement relates does not substantively amend EU standards, but the provisions of Schedule 8 apply to a consequential amendment proposed to be made by the instrument to a definition contained in the Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection: Small Ships) Regulations 1998.

The proposed Regulations implement the findings of the review of standards for older passenger ships carried out by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) in conjunction with the Domestic Passenger Ships Steering Group (DPSSG), which is a group on which both government and industry representatives sit to discuss safety matter relating to domestically operating passenger vessels.

The review of standards for older passenger ships was driven by recommendations from:

- the Thames Safety Inquiry, which was Lord Justice Clarke's investigation into the Marchioness tragedy, where 51 lives were lost. The investigation and resultant recommendations considered scenarios wider than just that of the Marchioness tragedy itself, and covered a range of possible circumstances anticipated for passenger vessels more generally

- the Formal Safety Assessment Study of Domestic Passenger Ship Safety, published in 2005
- the Marine Accident Investigation Branch

The relevant recommendations from the Thames Safety Inquiry were implemented for newer non-seagoing passenger ships in 2010, but the more challenging task of doing a similar thing for older passenger ships has been carefully considered over subsequent years.

The proposed regulations cover aspects of the following subject areas:

- damage stability (survivability) – the main purpose of this measure is to keep vessels afloat long enough to evacuate them in an emergency
- life-saving equipment – except in the lowest risk areas, this is to ensure there are sufficient spaces in life rafts and lifejackets for all onboard. Vessels operating at night to carry lifejackets with lights
- fire detection – unmanned engine rooms on passenger ships and any passenger sleeping accommodation to be fitted with fire detection to the standard of BS EN54
- fixed firefighting – engine rooms to be fitted with fixed firefighting equipment
- powered pumps: passenger ships to have a means of pumping out bilge water without reliance on hand pumps. Following consultation, a requirement for powered fire pumps was dropped
- bilge alarm: to be fitted in all compartments containing propulsion machinery and in any other compartment where bilge water can accumulate

One of the potentially most significant aspects of these proposals is the damage stability, or survivability, element. The reason vessels need to meet adequate standards in this area is that in the event of an incident, it is vital to keep a vessel afloat for long enough for persons to ascend to the upper deck, don lifejackets and remain above the surface of the water while awaiting rescue services.

Vessels that do not meet modern standards can sink in literally seconds, resulting in persons being cast into the water and possibly trapped beneath a submerged hull. The death toll is expected to be high in such a situation, as passenger vessels can carry anything from 13 to 250 persons. This is a tragedy waiting to happen.

The other measures combat the risks associated with fire and flooding and provide more robust standards for life-saving equipment.

This is a package designed to provide a safety regime that ensures a high level of consistency in safety standards across the range of passenger vessels, so that the public can be assured that on whichever passenger vessel they choose to travel, safety standards on that vessel are fit for the 21st century.

It has been suggested that these measures target historic vessels and even those vessels known as “Dunkirk Little Ships” (DLS). However, the proposals focus on passenger vessels, i.e., those carrying members of the public,

regardless of age. A few of these are historic in nature – others simply old – and a very small proportion of DLS included are subject to the measures.

No more than 2% to 3% of the pool of DLS are affected, as most DLS do not operate as passenger vessels.

The draft regulations are an important step forward to ensure standards for all UK passenger ships are suitable for the 21st century and to protect members of the travelling public. I am not prepared to see another tragedy on the scale of the Marchioness. A similar disaster, or one greater, would have an unacceptable social cost and have a damaging effect on the reputation of the tourist industry, which is so important to many areas of the United Kingdom.

The regulations are being published in draft 28 days before they are due to be laid for approval by each House of Parliament.

This is required under paragraph 14 of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, because they make a consequential amendment to a definition that was substituted in the Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection: Small Ships) Regulations 1998 by the Merchant Shipping (Marine Equipment) Regulations 2016, which were made (in part) under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972.

Further details are set out in the annex to the accompanying draft explanatory memorandum.

The [draft regulations, the accompanying draft explanatory memorandum and the impact assessment](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

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## **Ship safety: draft Merchant Shipping (Additional Safety Measures for Bulk Carriers) Regulations 2022**

I have today (21 March 2022) published as a draft the Merchant Shipping (Additional Safety Measures for Bulk Carriers) Regulations 2022, along with an accompanying draft Explanatory Memorandum.

The draft regulations revoke and replace the Merchant Shipping (Additional Safety Measures for Bulk Carriers) Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/1644) and the instruments that amend them and implement the most up to date requirements of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 ('the Convention'), affecting bulk carriers.

The draft regulations are being published for 28 days. Following the

conclusion of this period, and once any observations on the draft regulations have been taken into account, they will be laid for approval by each House of Parliament.

This procedure is required under paragraph 14 of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 because these Regulations revoke an instrument that was amended under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. The amendments were made by the Merchant Shipping (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendments etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1221).

Further details are contained in the Annex to the draft Explanatory Memorandum.

The draft regulations implement requirements for bulk carriers in Chapter XII of the Convention, including previously unimplemented requirements for bulk carriers of double-side skin construction constructed on or after 1 July 2006, standards and criteria for side structures of bulk carriers of single-side skin construction and standards for owner's inspection and maintenance of bulk carrier hatch covers.

The updated measures in Chapter XII are in force internationally, but the measures must also be incorporated into our national legislation to enable them to be enforced effectively, most notably to discourage non-compliance by non-UK flagged ships in UK waters, which would be detrimental to the safety of shipping in UK coastal areas.

The proposed regulations will ensure that UK law includes increased safety standards for bulk carriers and seafarers on UK flagged bulk carriers and non-UK flagged bulk carriers operating in UK waters by implementing updates to improve vessel stability and strength.

The draft regulations also include an ambulatory reference provision to ensure that future amendments to the Convention referred to in the draft regulations will automatically become UK law when they enter into force internationally.

As required by these regulations, a ministerial statement will be provided to both Houses of Parliament ahead of any amendment to Chapter XII, or other provision, of the Convention referenced in the regulations, prior to it coming into force in UK law by way of the ambulatory reference provision.

The [draft regulations and the accompanying draft explanatory memorandum](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

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## **Queen's Gurkha Signals Attestation**

# Parade 2022

News story

On 3 March 2022, 72 Gurkhas from Recruit Intake 2022 took part in their Queen's Gurkha Signals Attestation Parade.



Queen's Gurkha Signals Attestation Parade 2022, NW RFCA Copyright

On 3 March 2022, 72 Gurkhas from Recruit Intake 2022 took part in their Queen's Gurkha Signals Attestation Parade at Altcar Training Camp in Merseyside. Colonel of the Regiment, Major General JJ Cole OBE was the inspecting officer at the parade.

In accordance with regimental tradition, six newly commissioned Gurkha Warrant officers were also attested and officially commissioned. Also on the parade square were pipers and drummers, providing musical entertainment for those present.

Commandant at Altcar Training Camp, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Black (retired) commented,

It was humbling to have been invited to witness the Attestation Parade, the drill and turnout was immaculate. It has been an absolute delight to host the Queen's Gurkha Signals at Altcar Training Camp for their training and we congratulate all the young soldiers on their success today. We wish them all the best for the future.

Published 21 March 2022