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CIRCULAR

Sub: Operations of small vessels of less than 15 (tons) net carrying up to 12 passengers and various types of sports crafts at the beaches on the coast in the open sea conditions.

This Directorate is in receipt of several communications for grant of permission to small passenger launches/ sports crafts, both less than 15 (tons) net for short duration sailing and various types of water sports activities etc. at beaches on the coast / locations falling outside the declared inland water limits.

For such crafts there is no obligation to register under Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, since their net tonnage is less than 15 and they do not operate outside coastal waters. However, considering their area and nature of operation, it is essential that these craft are subjected to certain regulatory controls and they are equipped with sufficient lifesaving appliances, communication equipments etc. Further, it is essential that their activities are properly monitored and sufficient infrastructure (equipment, lifeguards etc.) is provided for timely assistance and rescue in case of the need.

It has therefore been decided to issue following guidelines for the concerned State Government authorities to regulate effectively the operation of such crafts. They are requested to monitor the operations of these crafts in accordance with the guidelines and ensure establishment of required infrastructure like, rescue boats, trained lifeguards, sufficient spare life saving fire fighting equipment, communication equipment, first aid boxes etc. at all beaches / locations where such crafts are permitted to operate:

A. General (For all Crafts)

1. The operations should be restricted to fair season in calm and settled weather conditions and in day light hours only.
2. All the mechanized crafts should be registered under Inland Vessels Act. Other non-mechanized crafts such as wind surfing boats may be assigned an identity number only.
3. Crafts of less than 2 NT (Net Tonnage) should not be permitted to operate beyond 1 Nautical Mile (NM) from the shore and crafts between 2NT to 15NT may be allowed to operate upto 3 NM. However, these distances are further subject to local weather conditions and decision of the Port Officer, in this respect.
4. The number of passengers should not increase to more than 12 on any craft.
5. The crafts should be subjected to annual inspection by Indian Register of Shipping to ensure that they are structurally sound properly maintained and comply with all the requirements stipulated herein as relevant for the craft.
6. All the passengers onboard shall be provided with MMD approved life jackets, which they shall wear before boarding the craft.

B. For passenger launches, Para sailing boats and Jet Ski

7. All the crafts should be provided with sufficient buoyancy material so that they do not sink even if flooded with water with full complement of persons on board.
8. Comfortable seats should be provided for all the passengers intended to be carried on a passenger launch and comfortable seating arrangements should be provided for all other passengers in other crafts.
9. The passenger launches and Para sailing boats should be subjected to flooding test, crowding test, inclining experiment, etc. to ensure that they have required stability and will be afloat , if filled with water, with passengers on board and will not capsize in case the passengers crowd on one side. The crafts not complying with the stability requirements should not permitted to operate.
10. The crafts less than 2 NT, shall be provided with one lifebuoy and the crafts between 2NT and 15NT shall be provided with two lifebuoys. The crafts should also be provided with some rescue quoits, fire buckets, fire extinguisher (4.5 Kg DCP fire extinguisher 1 No. for crafts less than 2NT and mechanical foam fire extinguisher plus 4.5 Kg DCP type fire extinguisher 1No. each for crafts between 2 to 15 NT). However these requirements do not apply to Jet Skis.

11. Jet Skis and other crafts provided without board motors shall have automatic engine cut out arrangement in case of crafts capsizing.

C. Para sailing boats

12. It would be preferable to have winch Para sailing boats for normal operations. Otherwise care should be taken for Beach Para sailing, that the operation area is clear of the crowd.

D. Infrastructure at the beaches where such crafts operate

13. In addition to the above, it is essential that some general facilities/equipment is provided at all the locations of such operations/ beaches so that the crafts and the persons in distress can be provided timely help. For this purpose, it is necessary that there should be minimum one MMD approved type rescue boat provided in the locations where such activities are limited in number (say not more than 6 crafts operate) and for the areas where there is a concentration of large number of crafts than the number of rescue boats should be raised to 2 to 3 (2 for number of crafts up to 15 and 3 above that). In addition, for the purpose of providing guidance, monitoring such activities and providing timely help when a craft is in distress, it is necessary that sufficient numbers of life guards are employed who are given necessary training and are provided with spare equipment such as life jackets, life buoys, buoyant apparatuses, rescue quoits etc.

E. Communication equipment

14. For communication the operators of the small crafts should carry mobile phone and the big crafts in addition should be provided with VHF. Similar facilities should be provided on shore for close monitoring of the crafts with an aim to provide timely help as and when necessary.

For big size crafts (above 2 NT) requiring to undertake operations beyond 3 NM, the additional safety requirements can be prescribed by the Directorate on a case to case basis on receipt of details of the craft and the reasons for going beyond 3 NM.

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