



## TECHNICAL CIRCULAR No. 904 of 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026

To	All Surveyors/Auditors. All flags
Title	<b>Fire safety for cargo ship</b>
Reference	SOLAS Chapter II-2 and FSS Code

### **FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR RORO, PASSENGER AND CARGO SHIPS**

This Regulatory News provides an overview of the key IMO resolutions MSC.550(108) and MSC.555(108), which amended parts of SOLAS Chapter II-2 and FSS Code. The amendments are related to fire safety requirements for Ro-Ro, Passenger and Cargo Ships and will enter into force on 1 January 2026.

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#### BACKGROUND KEY

Fire incidents onboard Ro-Ro passenger and vehicle carrier ships revealed challenges related to early fire detection, the effectiveness of fixed water-based fire-extinguishing systems, and containment of fire spread through ventilation and open deck arrangements. These challenges triggered the IMO to undertake a series of regulatory actions to improve fire safety standards for Ro-Ro and passenger ships.

Earlier amendments through Resolutions MSC.365(93) and MSC.421(98) introduced improvements to SOLAS Chapter II-2/20, addressing protection of vehicle, special category, and Ro-Ro spaces, and strengthened requirements for fixed water-based fire-extinguishing systems. In addition, EMSA conducted two research studies,

FIRESAFE I and FIRESAFE II, analyzing fire dynamics, system performance, and operational factors influencing fire risk in Ro-Ro spaces. Some key outcomes of these studies have been included in MSC.1/Circ.1615 - Interim Guidelines for Minimizing the Incidence and Consequences of Fires in Ro-Ro Spaces and Special Category Spaces of New and Existing Ro-Ro Passenger Ships.

Based on these studies, the IMO's SSE Sub-Committee developed additional amendments to SOLAS Chapter II-2 and the FSS Code, targeting identified regulatory gaps and modernizing requirements considering new ship designs and operational practices and demands. These amendments were adopted at the 108th session of the Maritime Safety Committee (May 2024) through Resolutions MSC.550(108) and MSC.555(108), which further enhance the fire safety framework. These regulatory developments reflect the IMO's ongoing effort to reduce fire risk across passenger and cargo ship types.

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The new requirements will affect design approval, plan review and survey processes for new ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026 and existing ships not later than their first survey after 1 January 2028.

As per MSC.1/Circ.1290 the term “first survey” means the first annual survey, the first periodical survey or the first renewal survey whichever is due first after the date specified in the relevant regulation. Shipowners and operators shall verify that fire detection, fire alarm systems, and fixed water-based systems are compliant with the amended SOLAS Chapter II-2/20, Chapter II-2/7, FSS Code Chapter 7 and FSS Code Chapter 9.

REFERENCE:

- SOLAS Chapter II-2/20

ATTACHMENTS: No.

Kindest Regards,  
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