



The American Club

Lifeboat Safety

*When you've seen one lifeboat,
you've only seen one lifeboat!*



Introduction

Mariners understand the critical necessity of lifeboats, but ideally hope never to use them. This may to some extent arise from a fear of unexpected malfunctions and accidents during lifeboat deployment, and may create a reluctance among mariners to give the fullest attention to training in lifeboat use. This guidance highlights the importance of in-depth training, robust familiarity with the specific lifeboat onboard, and rigorous maintenance routines to ensure the safety and reliability of lifeboats.

Understanding Lifeboat Varieties and Mechanisms

Types of Lifeboats

There are freefall lifeboats, which launch without human aid, and davit-launched lifeboats, which require mechanical assistance to deploy. Each type demands specific knowledge and handling skills.



A freefall lifeboat



A davit-launched lifeboat

Enclosure Types

Lifeboats can be fully enclosed or partially enclosed. The differences impact their operation and safety features.



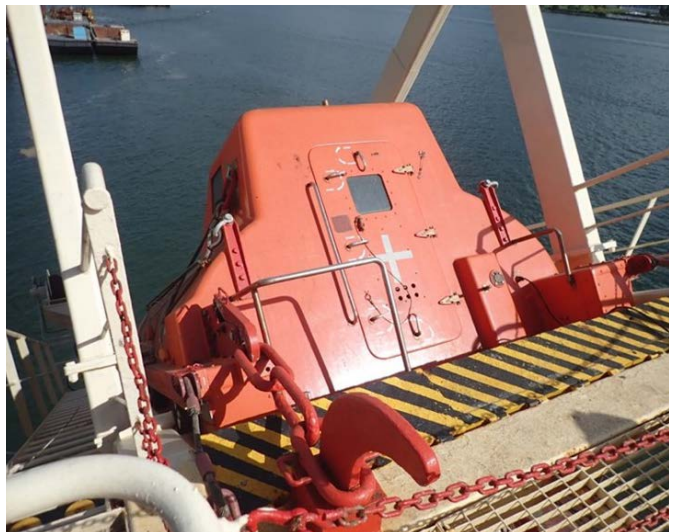
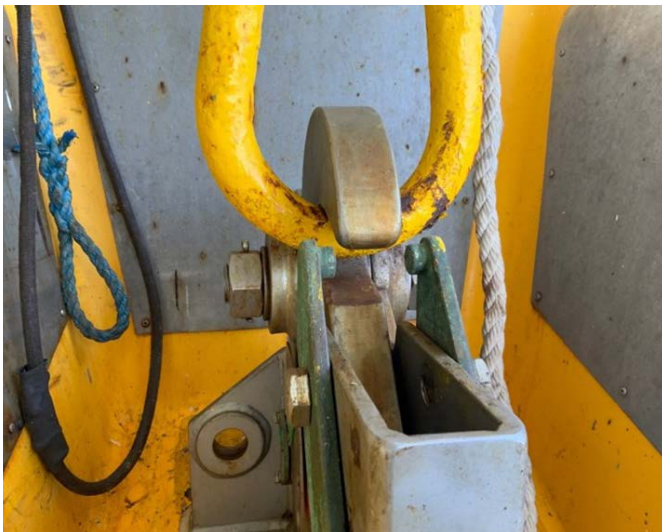
A partially enclosed lifeboat



A fully-enclosed lifeboat

Release Mechanisms

Davit-launched lifeboats are equipped with either onload or offload release mechanisms, each requiring distinct operational knowledge to prevent premature or faulty launching.



Two different release mechanisms

Training and Familiarity

Comprehensive Training

Comprehensive training is critical to ensure all crew members are proficient in procedures for boarding, launching, and operating their lifeboats, regardless of the lifeboat design and release mechanisms.



Welcome aboard!



Please take your seat!

Regular and realistic drills

Regular and realistic drills of various scenarios help to reinforce the crew's operational knowledge and promote safety, confidence and efficiency during actual emergencies.



Conducting a drill



A drill with a davit-launched lifeboat

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Training and Familiarity (cont'd)

Cross-Training

Cross-training facilitates the readiness of multiple crew members to competently conduct lifeboat operations, even during the absence or incapacity of key personnel.



Know where your seat is.



Especially if this is your assigned seat!

Safety Protocols and Procedures

Adherence to Guidelines

Published guidelines and procedures should be meticulously followed as they will increase operational safety and boost crew confidence in lifeboat functionality.

Use of Checklists

Detailed checklists should be implemented for every aspect of lifeboat deployment from launching to restowing. Checklists will help ensure thorough preparation and will help prevent operational errors.

Safety During Drills

Safety should be emphasized during lifeboat training and drills. Correct safety and operational procedures should be repeatedly emphasized and practiced. As per IMO's MSC.1/Circ.1277, *Interim Recommendation on Conditions for Authorization of Service Providers for Lifeboats, Launching Appliances and on Load Release Gear*, drills involving lowering and raising the lifeboat should only have as few crew members as are necessary to operate the boat.

Safety Protocols and Procedures (cont'd)

Documentation of Learning

Insights and lessons from both drills and real-life deployments should be captured to provide valuable feedback for continuous improvement.

Maintenance and Inspections

Regular Maintenance

Maintenance schedules are prescribed by lifeboat manufacturers and should be closely followed. They will ensure that all mechanical and safety systems are in optimal working condition.

Thorough Inspections

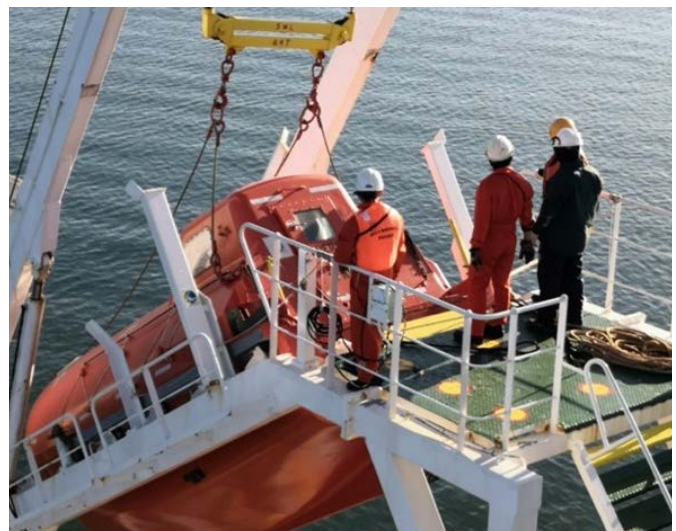
Detailed inspections should be conducted regularly and should go beyond superficial checks. They should include the lifeboat's internal systems as well to help ensure they remain fully functional over time.

Vendor Support

While external vendors play a critical role in maintaining lifeboat systems, crew involvement is essential for overseeing and validating the quality and completeness of maintenance work performed.



Maintenance and testing are important.



Whether done by the crew or vendors.

Maintenance and Inspections (cont'd)



Maintenance should include the launching systems for freefall and davit-launched lifeboats.



Safety is critical during maintenance, especially when testing the release mechanism.

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Do You Know YOUR Lifeboat?

1. Have you thoroughly reviewed the operating manual for your lifeboat?
2. Does your lifeboat have lashing or maintenance cables that require removal?
3. Are there davit safety pins that are required to be pulled out to allow your davit-launched lifeboat to be lowered?
4. Are there release hook safety pins that require removal on your davit-launched lifeboat?
5. Is there a release hook safety pin that is required to be removed before your freefall lifeboat can be launched?
6. Where is the battery charging cable connection to your lifeboat and how do you disconnect it?
7. Should you put on your lifejacket before entering your davit-launched lifeboat? Your freefall lifeboat?
8. Does your lifeboat have a drain hole that needs to have the plug inserted before launching?
9. Does your freefall lifeboat have a safety pin in the release lever that is required to be removed?
10. Where is the remote-control wire for lowering your davit-launched lifeboat from inside the lifeboat?
11. On your davit-launched lifeboat, do you know how to operate the release hooks in both the offload mode (best in good sea conditions) and the onload mode (can be best in rough seas)?
12. Should you use a painter on your davit-launched lifeboat? Your freefall lifeboat?
13. Do you know where the painter release is located inside your lifeboat?
14. Should you start your lifeboat's engine before launching or after?
15. Where is the emergency release located in your davit-launched lifeboat in case the primary release mechanism doesn't work?
16. Is there a bypass valve that needs to be closed or opened to enable your freefall lifeboat to launch?
17. If your freefall lifeboat has a pump release, how many pumps before the lifeboat falls (or, how many pumps before you should be concerned if the release will actually work)?
18. If the release doesn't work on your freefall lifeboat, what is the emergency procedure?

Do You Know YOUR Lifeboat? (cont'd)

19. Do you know where the food, water, extra safety equipment, and first aid kit are stored in your lifeboat?
20. When doing maintenance on your lifeboat, what safety pins and lashing should NOT be removed?
21. Do the inspections on your lifeboat include the launching components or do they primarily focus on food, water, and safety gear in your lifeboat?
22. After successfully launching your lifeboat in a real emergency, do you thank:
 - the lifeboat manufacturer;
 - the people who trained you to properly launch your lifeboat;
 - the people who did all the periodic maintenance and safety inspections on the lifeboat; or
 - All of the above?
23. Have you checked the lifeboat boarding ladder?
24. Is the rope free from rot, especially near the securing thimble?
25. Is the anchor canvas in good condition?

Conclusion

Lifeboat safety and reliability require thorough familiarity with the lifeboat and its systems, the rigorous application of training, and strict adherence to maintenance procedures. Mariners should be ever-prepared to deploy their specific lifeboats and confident that these critical safety devices will perform flawlessly in emergencies. Prioritizing lifeboat training, safety and maintenance based on the specific lifeboat onboard enhances safety at sea and instills confidence to those who might face life-threatening situations.

NEVER assume your lifeboat is identical to lifeboats you have seen on prior vessels. Take the time to carefully read the operating manual and ensure you are familiar with every aspect of the lifeboat installed on your vessel because, when you've seen one lifeboat, you've only seen one lifeboat.



Be confident it will work when needed.



Know your lifeboat!





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The American Club would like to specially thank [Independent Maritime Consulting, LLC](#) for their contributions to this guidance as well as for furnishing the photographs that are used throughout.