



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

# **SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA**

## What is SOLAS?

The **International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)** is an important international treaty concerning the **safety of merchant ships**. It ensures that ships registered by signatory States comply with minimum safety standards in construction, equipment and operation of ships.

## What is the main objective of the SOLAS Convention?

The SOLAS Convention aims to specify **minimum standards** for the **construction, equipment** and **operation of ships**, compatible with their safety. Flag States are responsible for ensuring that ships under their flag comply with its requirements, and a number of certificates are prescribed in the Convention as proof that this has been done. Control provisions also allow Contracting Governments to inspect ships of other Contracting States if there are clear grounds for believing that the ship and its equipment do not substantially comply with the requirements of the Convention. This procedure is known as Port State Control.



## How was SOLAS adopted?

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The first version of SOLAS was adopted in **1914** in response to the sinking of the White Star Liner Titanic. It prescribed new international requirements dealing with safety of navigation for all merchant ships which include the number of lifeboats and other emergency equipment along with safety procedures and continuous radio watches. However, the 1914 treaty never entered into force due to the outbreak of the First World War. Further revisions were adopted in 1929 and 1948.

The **1960 Convention** was adopted on **17 June 1960** and entered into force on **26 May 1965**. It was the fourth SOLAS Convention and was the first major achievement for the International Maritime Organization (IMO). It represented a considerable step forward in modernizing regulations and keeping up with technical developments in the shipping industry.

The **SOLAS 1974**, as amended, entered into force on **25 May 1980**. The Convention is the version currently in force and it is unlikely to be replaced by a new instrument because of the new tacit amendment procedure that is included in Article VIII. Still, the said Convention has been updated and amended on numerous occasions, including the **1978 and 1988 Protocols**.

## What is the difference between SOLAS Protocol 1978 and SOLAS Protocol 1988?

**SOLAS Protocol 1978** covers the important amendments pertaining to **tanker safety** and **pollution prevention** particularly the requirement and acceptable exemption for inert gas systems and the requirement for radar and steering gear control systems.

**SOLAS Protocol 1988** covers the **changes to SOLAS Chapter V**, such as the details of the navigational systems and equipment referred to in the records of equipment attached to the certificates and also introduces a new Harmonized System of Survey and Certification (HSSC) to harmonize two (2) Conventions, namely: the International Convention on Load Lines and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 as modified by the Protocol of 1978 (MARPOL 73/78).







## How many States are parties to SOLAS Protocol 1978?

As of **21 February 2019**, there are **121 Contracting Parties**, including the Philippines, which are signatories to the said Protocol representing approximately **97.97%** of the gross tonnage of the world's shipping fleet.

## How many States are parties to SOLAS Protocol 1988?

As of **21 February 2019**, there are **116 maritime countries**, including the Philippines, which are signatories to the SOLAS Protocol 1988 representing **97.68%** of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant shipping fleet.

# What are the general provisions of the SOLAS Convention?

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The current SOLAS Convention consists of **nine (9) Articles** setting out the general obligations, amendment procedures, followed by an Annex divided into **fourteen (14) Chapters**:

**Chapter I** – General Provisions

**Chapter II – 1** – Construction-Subdivision and Stability, Machinery and Electrical Installations

**Chapter II – 2** – Fire Protection, Fire Detection and Fire Extinction

**Chapter III** – Life-saving Appliances and Arrangements

**Chapter IV** – Radiocommunications

**Chapter V** – Safety of Navigation

**Chapter VI** – Carriage of Cargoes



**Chapter VII** – Carriage of Dangerous Goods

**Chapter VIII** – Nuclear Ships

**Chapter IX** – Management for the Safe Operation of  
Ships

**Chapter X** – Safety Measures to Enhance Maritime  
Safety

**Chapter XI-1** – Special Measures to Enhance  
Maritime Safety

**Chapter XI-2** – Special Measures to Enhance  
Maritime Security

**Chapter XII** – Additional Safety Measures for  
Bulk Carriers

**Chapter XIII** – Verification of Compliance

**Chapter XIV** – Safety Measures for Ships  
Operating in Polar Waters

# What are the surveys conducted under the SOLAS Convention?

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The inspection and survey of ships is carried out by officers of the country in which the ship is registered.

**A passenger ship shall be subjected to the following surveys:**

- a. A survey before the ship is put in service;
- b. A periodical survey once every twelve months; and
- c. Additional surveys, as the occasion arises.

**In the case of cargo ships, after the initial survey, the ship is subject to a subsequent survey:**

- a. Every two years in respect of life-saving appliances and other equipment;
- b. Once every year in respect of radio installation; and
- c. In respect of hull, machinery and equipment, at such intervals as the Administration may consider necessary to ensure that the ship's condition is satisfactory.

**Other surveys include:**

- a. Surveys of life-saving appliances and other equipment of cargo ships;
- b. Surveys of radio and radar installations of cargo ships; and
- c. Surveys of hull, machinery and equipment of cargo ships.

After any survey of the ship, no change shall be made in the structural arrangements, machinery, equipment, etc., covered by the survey, without the sanction of the Administration.



## What are the certificates issued under the SOLAS Convention and their validity?

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- a. Passenger Ship Safety Certificate – 12 months
- b. Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate – 5 years
- c. Cargo Ship Safety Equipment Certificate – 5 years
- d. Exemption Certificate - shall not be valid longer than the period of the certificates to which it refers
- e. Cargo Ship Safety Radio Certificate – 5 years





## **Are there exceptions to the applicability of the SOLAS Convention?**

The SOLAS Convention shall not apply to the following:

- a. Ships of war and troopships
- b. Cargo ships of less than 500 gross tonnage
- c. Ships not propelled by mechanical means
- d. Wooden ships of primitive built
- e. Pleasure yachts not engaged in trade
- f. Fishing vessels

## **When did the Philippines ratify the 1974 SOLAS Convention, SOLAS Protocol 1978 and SOLAS Protocol 1988?**

The Philippines has ratified the 1974 SOLAS Convention in 1982 while the Instruments of Accession of the SOLAS Protocol 1978 and SOLAS Protocol 1988 were deposited to the IMO Secretary General on 24 April 2018 and 06 June 2018, respectively.



## What will be the effects of ratifying the 1978 and 1988 Protocols in the Philippines?

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Through the ratification of the 1978 and 1988 Protocols, the Philippines could reap the following benefits:

- Strengthening of the Philippines' performance as a Flag State
- Stronger basis for promulgation of local rules for the Philippine domestic ships
- Single and uniform survey system and certification to all types of Conventional Philippine-registered ships
- Safer operations of Philippine flagged ships in and outside the country



## Which government agencies and private associations were involved in the consultation process for the accession?

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The following agencies have been consulted and have concurred in the proposed accession:



Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA);



Philippine Coast Guard (PCG);



Philippine Ports Authority (PPA);



Filipino Shipowners Association (FSA); and



International Maritime Association of the Philippines (INTERMAP).





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  - o <http://www.imo.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/ReferencesAndArchives/HistoryofMARPOL/Documents/MARPOL%20-%201978%20Protocol.pdf>
  - o <http://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/StatusOfConventions/Documents/StatusOfTreaties.pdf>
- **Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc.**

SOLAS Frequently Asked Questions

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- **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

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- o <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/idrl/l456EN.pdf>

- **Senate of the Philippines**

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- **Draft National Interest Analysis: Philippines**

Proposed ratification and subsequent implementation of the Protocol of 1988 Relating to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended (SOLAS 88 Protocol)



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