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THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

LIBERIA MARITIME AUTHORITY

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Subject: PREVENTION OF FATALITIES ASSOCIATED WITH CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL / UNKNOWN OR UNVERIFIED LIQUIDS / NON-BEVERAGE ALCOHOL PRODUCTS – SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CONTROLS, CREW AWARENESS, AND MEDICAL RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

Ref:

- (a) SOLAS Chapter IX (ISM Code Implementation)
- (b) ISM Code – Sections 1.2.2, 6, 7, and 10
- (c) Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006 – Regulation 4.3
- (d) [Liberian Marine Notice INS-001 – Safety Inspections of Liberian Ships](#)
- (e) ILO Code of Practice: Accident Prevention on Board Ship at Sea and in Port

Dear Shipowners / Operators / Masters / Officers and Crew:

The purpose of this Marine Advisory is to reinforce Safety Management System (SMS) requirements and operational controls related to the prevention of fatalities and serious illness associated with the consumption of alcohol, unknown or unverified liquids, and substances not intended for human consumption aboard Liberian-flagged vessels.

Since the issuance of [Marine Advisory 23/2025](#), the Administration has investigated additional cases, including a recent incident last week involving two fatalities onboard following the consumption of alcohol/unknown liquid. These cases confirm recurring deficiencies and highlight the need to strengthen existing controls and reinforce safety measures.

Recent incidents demonstrate that consumption of alcohol or unidentified substances, particularly those obtained from uncontrolled sources or involving high-concentration ethyl alcohol products, can result in rapid deterioration of crew health and fatal outcomes despite onboard medical assistance.

This Advisory highlights regulatory obligations, identifies recurring safety deficiencies, summarizes recent casualty cases, and outlines required preventive actions.

Alcohol / Unknown Liquid Casualty Overview

The Administration has reviewed multiple incidents involving fatalities and serious illness occurring during routine voyages. These incidents involved the consumption of alcohol or unknown/unverified

liquids, often within accommodation spaces during off-duty periods, and resulted in rapid deterioration and collapse onboard.

Marine Casualty Summaries

Case 1 – Fatalities following consumption of blended ethyl alcohol

A Chief Engineer was found deceased in his cabin after failing to respond to calls. It was subsequently confirmed that the Master and Chief Engineer had consumed blended ethyl alcohol in the Master's cabin prior to the incident. Thereafter, the Master developed acute symptoms including deterioration in condition, reduced responsiveness, and subsequent loss of vital signs. Despite monitoring and medical assistance, the Master was later declared deceased.



Case 2 – Fatalities following consumption of unknown liquid (70% ethyl alcohol identified)

A Bosun was found in a severely impaired condition, described as “heavily intoxicated,” with breathing difficulty. The cabin reportedly contained empty shot glasses and soft drink containers. A bottle labeled “Ethyl Alcohol 70%” was reportedly found in the cabin. Crew accounts indicate that the Bosun and another crew member consumed an unidentified liquid, later associated with the bottle labeled ‘Ethyl Alcohol 70%. Bosun’s condition deteriorated, and he was declared deceased. A second crewmember who reportedly consumed the same substance developed symptoms including vomiting, vision deterioration, disorientation, convulsions, and respiratory failure, and subsequently died onboard.



Case 3 – Multiple casualties following consumption of substance obtained in port

Three crew members consumed a substance/liquid contained in a bottle that had been purchased from stevedores in the last port of call, as reported by a surviving crew member. Following consumption, one crew member was found unconscious and later declared dead. A second crew member developed symptoms including vision degradation, severe sweating, low body temperature, severe pain and was later found dead. A third crewmember developed symptoms and was disembarked for medical treatment, where ethanol intoxication was reported.



Key Safety Failures Identified

Investigations identified the following recurring deficiencies:

- Consumption of unknown or unverified liquids
- Introduction of substances onboard from uncontrolled external sources (e.g., stevedores)
- Storage of liquids of unknown origin within crew cabins
- Consumption of substances not confirmed as safe for drinking
- Inadequate control of high-concentration alcohol or chemical products
- Delayed recognition of serious medical symptoms requiring escalation
- Insufficient monitoring of affected personnel following onset of symptoms

Flag Administration Requirements and Best Practices

The Administration has reviewed recent fatalities and serious medical incidents and notes that inadequate control of alcohol and hazardous substances onboard remains a significant risk factor.

In accordance with SOLAS, the ISM Code, and applicable Liberian Marine Notices, Shipowners, Operators, and Masters are reminded that hazard identification, risk assessment, and control measures are mandatory requirements for all operations affecting crew safety and health.

Review and Implement Risk-Based Procedures

- Ensure the SMS adequately addresses risks associated with:
 - Alcohol consumption onboard
 - Introduction of unknown or unverified liquids
 - Exposure to non-beverage alcohol products
- Establish procedures for:
 - Control and authorization of alcohol consumption (where permitted)
 - Prohibition of consumption of unknown or unverified substances
 - Monitoring and reporting of crew condition

Control of Alcohol, Chemicals, and Liquids

- Prohibit storage of unknown or unverified liquids in crew cabins
- Ensure chemicals and high-concentration alcohol products are:
 - Stored in controlled designated locations
 - Clearly labeled
 - Not accessible for consumption
- Maintain strict inventory control
- Investigate immediately any unidentified substances

Crew Awareness and Safe Practices

- Reinforce the prohibition of consuming unknown or unverified liquids
- Ensure crew are aware of symptoms such as:

- Vomiting
- Breathing difficulty
- Vision impairment
- Severe sweating or abnormal body temperature
- Promote immediate reporting of:
 - Illness following ingestion
 - Suspicious substances onboard
 - Presence of suspicious substances onboard

Medical Response and Monitoring

- Contact radio-medical services immediately
- Continuously monitor affected personnel
- Do not leave symptomatic individuals unattended
- Consider diversion or medical evacuation without delay if the condition deteriorates

Supervision, Training, and Oversight

- Include substance control in onboard training
- Reinforce officer responsibilities for monitoring crew condition
- Address risks in toolbox talks, drills, and inspections

Required Actions to Prevent Recurrence

1. Implement strict controls on alcohol and prohibit consumption of unknown or unverified liquids
2. Prevent introduction of unauthorized substances onboard
3. Ensure secure storage and control of chemical and alcohol products
4. Enhance crew awareness of ingestion risks
5. Ensure early detection and prompt medical response
6. Strengthen supervision and SMS enforcement
7. Maintain complete incident records and corrective actions

The Administration reminds all operators that fatalities associated with alcohol misuse, unknown liquid consumption, and non-beverage alcohol products represent a serious and preventable risk to life at sea.

Strict compliance with SMS controls, effective management of substances onboard, enhanced crew awareness, and timely medical response are essential to prevent recurrence of these incidents.

For more information, please contact the Investigations Department at investigations@liscr.com.

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